

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

A Christian perspective on enabling spiritual formation in relation to work

SUSAN JANE FRANCES HOWARD, MA

ORCID 0000-0002-0052-3747

Doctor of Philosophy

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for a postgraduate research degree of the University of Winchester.

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**UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER**

**ABSTRACT**

**A Christian perspective on enabling spiritual formation in relation to work**

**Susan Jane Frances Howard**

**ORCID 0000-0002-0052-3747**

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**June, 2017**

This thesis is an action research investigation into the influence of my Christian *habitus* on my consultancy practice. My research question: How does my Christian faith inform the work I do? is located within the academic field of Spirit at Work. The complexity and difficulties of my professional practice are explored using the literature on Christian spirituality.

My investigation uses the research method of practical theology to explore: my own Christian perspective; my role as a spiritual mentor; the nature of spiritual formation; and, faith in relation to work. The analytical methods of theological reflection, narrative inquiry, and autoethnography support the critical reflection. Five themes emerge: the evangelical basis of my Christian perspective; an understanding of the grace of God; the consideration of resistance as sin; strategies to enable spiritual formation; and complex combinations of faith in relation to work.

This study has enabled me to interrogate my approach to spiritual formation in relation to work. My inquiry in a variety of contexts – with colleagues, one individual, and with a client – has developed my ability as a reflexive practitioner, and has strengthened my vocation as a spiritual mentor. I have used the Holistic Development Model (HDM) to underpin my approach to spiritual mentoring, and created a Christian interpretation of it. Spiritual formation is explored through the topics of: church, faith, purpose and mission using scripture, adventure and leadership, and difficulty and struggle.

The research provides insights into my work as a professional consultant in the area of leadership development. My reflexive learning, combined with participative inquiry, provides an insider perspective on living within an evangelical Christian worldview. Difficulties over how to interpret Christian faith in work contexts are explored, particularly with regard to inclusivity. The research links spiritual formation with leadership, concluding that, in my practice, faith takes precedence.

Keywords: Spirit at Work, Spirituality, Grace, Sin, Faith, Christian, Mentor, Catalyst, Formation, Leadership

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## **A Christian perspective on enabling spiritual formation in relation to work**

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" (John 18:37-38)  
Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14: 6)

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Overview of Chapter 1**

I put together the above biblical quotations because, for me, they represent core concerns which lie at the heart of Christianity; they indicate the dichotomy that is present in debates about faith and spirituality. This introduction provides an overview of the broad context of the academic field of Spirit at Work (SAW), and my reasons for conducting a research inquiry. I explain why Christian spirituality matters to me, and my rationale for adopting action research as a methodology. I provide an overview of the structure of this thesis, and indicate where the four core areas I have investigated are explored. The four areas are: my Christian perspective as an evangelical; seeing myself as a spiritual mentor; an exploration of spiritual formation; and, the relationship of faith to work.

This thesis is positioned as first person action research framed as a subjective, narrative inquiry. I therefore use first-person language to describe the continuing phases of thinking, studying, planning, taking action, analysing and reflecting on action. Action research supports knowledge creation as being about more than intellectual analysis; it aims at social change and self-transformation through participation. Sheldrake (1994) articulates, 'Participating knowledge is what matters' (Sheldrake, 1994, p.38); he claims that participating knowledge changes both the knower and the known, and is the kind of knowledge that can transform our lives. Writing this thesis has been a transformational experience for me. I have been able to identify myself as an evangelical Christian, understood more clearly what is difficult within the field of SAW, and recognised my potential to support people as they develop their understanding of what faith in the workplace means for them.

#### **1.2 Arriving at the beginning**

I started out with a broad field of inquiry which led to my original research question: How does my Christian faith inform the processes I use to enable spiritual formation amongst leaders in organizational contexts? Over two years I undertook four main cycles of action research, operating as a participant observer (Spradley, 1980). Later I transcribed tapes from each cycle

to look for themes. As I began to write up my research, my approach to reflexive analysis was challenged by my supervisory team. I was led towards a deeper and more personal investigation drawing on methods such as narrative inquiry, and autoethnography. I have engaged with these methods to help make sense of my life and work. Using analysis of narrative as a method to understand life story is both a hermeneutical<sup>1</sup> and phenomenological<sup>2</sup> process intended to ‘explore and understand the inner world of individuals’ (Lieblich *et al*, 1998, p.7). My research position has guided me towards a closer interpretation of my own experiences in the context of making sense of my work. The writing process led me to reconsider the focus of my inquiry, and I reframed my research question as: How does my interpretation of being Christian inform the work I do?

Despite the personal nature of my inquiry, my investigation has been shaped in the context of my work with colleagues and clients. Therefore, whilst my inquiry is subjective, as I translate my inner world into actions in the outer world, the learning and outcomes affect others. Insights from my experience of SAW, and my personal spiritual journey, are shared through the publication of this thesis as a research resource. I hope it will support others’ spiritual journeys in relation to work.

### **1.3 The academic field of Spirit at Work**

My position as a Christian in the field of SAW has become more translucent and defined as a result of my investigation; I have located myself more precisely. I start by outlining the academic field before showing the context of my work within it.

The field of SAW, also known as Spirituality in the Workplace, or Workplace Spirituality began to emerge in the late 1980’s to early 1990’s. It became mainstreamed in two scholarly organizations: the International Academy of Business Disciplines, through its track on Spirituality and Organizations; and, in the Academy of Management, through a special interest group on Management, Spirituality and Religion. The *Journal of Organizational Change Management* was an early vehicle for publishing on the topic and later, in 2004, the *Journal for Management, Spirituality and Religion* (JMSR) began in order to provide an outlet for the growing number of academics wanting to write about the subject. Other business education associations and conferences began to include spirituality and related topics from the mid 1990’s. Biberman (2003, p.421-428) gives a detailed overview of the emerging field. Several

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<sup>1</sup> Hermeneutics is concerned with interpretation

<sup>2</sup> Phenomenology is concerned with perceptions of meaning

books cultivated an interest in the area of spirituality in business including *The Reinvention of Work* (Fox, 1995), *Leading with Soul* (Bolman and Deal, 1995) and *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

A core text came at the millennium, *Work and Spirit: A reader of New Spiritual Paradigm for Organizations* (Biberman and Whitty, 2000), which featured founding influencers such as Judi Neal, Martin Rutte, David Boje, Dorothy Marcic, Andre Delbecq, Len Tischler, Lee Robbins and Gerald Cavanagh. The text recognised SAW as being applicable in all professions, as well as in management, economics, and business in general. SAW scholarship was identified as interdisciplinary, and the text examined theoretical perspectives, as well as individual, organizational and societal applications. A variety of themes emerged including: the search for deeper meaning in work; the need for a higher purpose for organizational life than the pursuit of money; the claim that humanity is evolving toward a higher consciousness, and self-transcendence. These themes were rooted in individual and personal inner transformation, and explored using a diverse mix of views and approaches. Scholars acknowledged that they were motivated by their own spiritual beliefs and practices; their perspectives and interests influenced their professional interests and expertise. One chapter was written from a Christian perspective.

The generally idealistic espoused view of SAW is that work needs to be reinvented in terms of work values, systems and organizational processes, so that people, both inside and outside of work, are properly helped; the underlying message is that spiritual values offer a foundation which can enrich professional lives. The SAW field is an optimistic paradigm which seeks to counter the 'dominant value system of greed, excessive competition and alienation from our fellow worker and the world around us' (Biberman and Whitty, 2000, p.xix). SAW is seen as embracing learning, community, collaboration and recognition of our inter-connectedness as human beings. It is supportive of creating more humane work environments, ones in which working people can seek meaning and purpose and make a contribution to the world. External realities, regarding the global macro-economic and political environment, culture, social justice, ethics and organizational power, were recognised as being problematic but such concerns were not fully addressed.

Three years later, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) produced the *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*. This book acknowledged that many scholars in

the field felt *called* to develop connections between spirit and work. The editors sought to position spirituality in the workplace as something that could be engaged with scientifically, something that could be objectively measured and defined more fully. They were keen to distance SAW from religion, stating:

it is essential [...] that workplace spirituality be separated from “soaring rhetoric” (Sass, 2000, p.198), denominational polemics, and the faith blanket in which it is frequently cloaked. The goal is neither to confirm nor disconfirm particular belief systems but, rather to separate scientific inquiry from such suppositions entirely. (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003, p.4)

The editors wanted to investigate whether, and how, spirituality could be related to organizational performance. If evidence of a relationship between the two was discovered, then a new understanding of the workplace might emerge. Such understanding might encourage organizational scientists to ‘redefine their ontological stance’ (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003, p.21-22). The editors examined various ways of conceptualising SAW and applying theory in practice.

These early works were primarily American. In 2004 I co-authored *The Spirit at Work Phenomenon* (Howard and Welbourn, 2004) to present an overview of the SAW field, and to contextualise approaches and resources, for the UK and Europe. The book was intentionally written for a secular readership to present the case for SAW. We located spirituality as both a personal and a corporate journey that connected to themes of: self and leadership; others and community; nature and social responsibility; and, higher power and transformation in business. We talked about the implications of faith. One criticism we received was that we did not write about a personal God. This critique planted a seed of doubt in my mind about the way in which I was representing spirituality; further questioning has culminated in this study and investigation.

A third seminal text was published in 2013, the *Handbook of Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace* edited by Judi Neal. The book is ‘a collection of invited essays and research papers by the preeminent researchers and practitioners in the field of faith and spirituality in the workplace’ (Neal, 2013, p.6). The aim of SAW is summed up as a ‘desire to challenge the prevailing paradigms that have created workplaces that feel soulless and full of suffering for so many’ (Neal, 2013, p.6). The textbook conveys how SAW research has shifted over time and looks at where its future might lie. It pays tribute to pioneers in SAW, some of whom have previously been mentioned, but who also include Jody Fry, John Renesch, Don McCormick, Yochanan Altman and Cindy Wigglesworth. From the title of the handbook and from the

content, one thing that has changed is the ability of the SAW movement to acknowledge and embrace the reality of faith as part of dialogues around spirituality. Neal points out:

Over time, practitioners and scholars have been able to find more common ground and to see that [...] there is a great deal of value in learning about what the different religious traditions have to offer in terms of workplace wisdom.  
(Neal, 2013, p.10)

The contributors to the handbook are management scholars, who are from a variety of particular faith perspectives. My research builds on this platform to offer insights from the perspective of an evangelical Christian.

The faith dimension has been part of the stumbling block within SAW as it has attempted to differentiate spirituality from religion, 'The relationship between concepts of spirituality and religion remains unclear in the field of faith and spirituality at work' (Phipps and Benefiel, 2013, p.33). The authors argue that, to mature, SAW 'needs both conceptual clarity on the [...] terms [spirituality and religion] and a working understanding of the relationship between the two' (Phipps and Benefiel, 2013, p.33). Spirituality is seen to be life enhancing, holistic<sup>3</sup>, and supportive of human well-being in the widest sense. And workplace spirituality can be seen as the creation of an environment 'in which people view themselves as having an inner life that is nourished by meaningful work and takes place in the context of a community' (Duchon and Plowman, 2005, p.816, cited in Phipps and Benefiel, 2013, p.34). But making spirituality amorphous, in attempts to be inclusive and all-encompassing, can prevent it from being accepted, and leads to it being unhelpfully dismissed:

Despite the wider than religion rhetoric, "spirituality" looks suspiciously like a diluted, theologically attenuated (and theologically unsophisticated) version of Christianity, garnished with an assortment of extraneous accretions, drawn principally from bowdlerized accounts of ancient wisdom and popular psychology. Spirituality is, in short, a deeply artificial, shallow [...] concept.  
(Paley, 2008, p.9)

I am concerned by the difficulty that surrounds faith, spirituality and work. I have attempted to address these central issues in my thesis.

The all-embracing nature of spirituality, and ambivalence about spiritual distinctions within SAW, has made definitions of spirituality problematic. This is a challenge for those with a strong faith:

There's huge fear among many Christians and perhaps many of other faiths that the whole topic of spirit and work is part of some conspiracy by New Agers (whatever that

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<sup>3</sup>Embracing the whole of life

means to the accuser), that at the least will make people flaky and at worst will lead them away from true faith.  
(Sullivan, 2013, p.29)

The ability to engage with spirituality is, often more complicated, and paradoxical, than it first appears. The area presents a challenge to academics:

Hicks contends that scholars have invoked the religion/spirituality dichotomy as a way to use definitions to relieve the difficulty of beliefs that may be controversial, rendering them irrelevant because they are “religious” in nature (Hicks, 2002).  
(Phipps and Benefiel, 2013, p.35)

Whilst differences between religious beliefs are perplexing, it is clear that peoples’ spiritual lives are deeply influenced by different religious paths, as King (2009) observes, ‘It is [...] more appropriate to speak of “spiritualities” rather than spirituality in the singular. Christian spirituality differs from Jewish, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist spirituality’ (King, 2009, p.4). Adherents of different religions hold to truth claims that are not easily assimilated into one, overarching, approach to spirituality. However, many ‘contemporary spiritualities have come into existence which are not defined by traditional religions but are secular or newly created’ (King, 2009, p.4). These contemporary spiritualities aim to be inclusive and to unify different world views, through syncretism. MacGregor (2012), and Smith (2008) have explored some of the syncretistic areas, where attempts have been made to join up concepts about God, energy, science and consciousness. It is clear that the relationship between concepts of spirituality and religion have not been effectively resolved within the field, and this remains a central issue within SAW debates, as Phipps and Benefiel (2013, p.33) highlight.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the variety of different spiritualities or religious faiths directly, they are of relevance to my research as they impact Christian sense-making. Recent developments in SAW show that the either/or approach to religion and spirituality is shifting; there is recognition that they are distinct yet ‘overlapping constructs’ (Phipps and Benefiel, 2013, p.42). Revisions in how to approach the SAW debate include the proposal that *faith* is ‘a more neutral and overarching scholarly rubric that includes both religion and spirituality’ (Miller and Ewest, 2013, p.75). I believe it is important for Christians to take part in SAW debates to bring the Christian faith perspective into this spiritual milieu. This is one reason why I continue to work and wrestle in the SAW field and why I have embarked on this research.

I have been committed to SAW, and I have worked with people in the field for a number of years. Despite growing enthusiasm for spirituality in the academic field, my colleagues and I

have found it difficult to find clients, and to influence mainstream organizational life. My reflexive inquiry through this thesis is helping me to become clearer about the problem, what my work is about and who it is for.

#### **1.4 Why this inquiry?**

Diverse spiritual viewpoints present genuine difficulties when it comes to exploring how our understanding of spirituality might be applied, particularly in the workplace. Ferrer (2005) recognises that 'Spiritual traditions offer disparate and often conflicting visions of reality and human nature' (Ferrer, 2005, p.107), and that these very real conflicts between different spiritual paths which create difficulties are 'profoundly perplexing' (Ferrer, 2005, p.107).

Gibbons (1999) recognized the significance of the underlying differences:

Spirituality, once an aspect of religion, has turned the linguistic tables and religion is now seen as one of many possible spiritual paths. Once, spirituality was a path to deep communion with God. Now God, for many, is no longer the object of their spiritual search: the path is one of communion and connectedness with many other transcendent conceptions. [Spirituality] suggests a personal transcendent conception and a personal spiritual journey, [but] not necessarily a patriarchal God, nor a scripted spiritual journey. The term has religious roots that inform current understandings, but it rejects religious grand narratives.

(Gibbons, 1999, p.14)

The differing religious paths, with different concepts of God, and varying belief systems, make the terrain of spirituality contentious and complex.

Optimism in the SAW field translates into practitioners being guided towards embracing a generalised sense of spirituality. Evidence of this is provided by Neal and Harpham (2012) who suggest the following guidelines are helpful to adhere to at the beginning of projects/programmes involving spirituality:

Spirituality is defined primarily as meaning, purpose, and wanting to make a difference.

No proselytising or promoting of religion.

Understand that everyone is a spiritual being.

Be willing to listen to differences in life experiences and to value and honor them.

Identify shared values and principles that everyone on the team can agree to.

Commit to a culture of valuing diversity.

(Neal and Harpham, 2012, p.26)

This is of direct significance for my research as I am connected to one of the authors, Alan Harpham; he was a participant in my first action research cycle, where I attempted to question some of the generalised ideas to arrive at a practical consultancy approach. The quotation demonstrates the ambiguity involved in working with spirituality. The difficulty that stems

from linking spirituality to any particular religion is apparent, and the authors express a need to value everyone's diverse experience yet at the same time identify shared values. I find these guidelines hard to interpret. As theologian Rowan Williams points out, 'it is important to be clear where the differences lie' (Williams, 2012, p.94). Williams draws on Clooney (2010) who defines a way forward through:

comparative theology [which] seeks to learn what may serve the goal of spiritual maturity within the commitments already undertaken and accepted. Instead of proposing a theology of inclusion [...] it simply performs "acts of including" by engaging carefully and imaginatively with other voices and habits.  
(Williams, 2012, p.131)

Williams's ideas are explored further in Chapter 5.5.4. It does not seem possible to arrive at a generalized position regarding faith, therefore it is important for me to understand my own particular faith and what that means for my work life.

Those who want to explore spirituality without reference to God, or religion, are opening the door to an investigation of the spiritual dimension. The SAW environment provides a forum for an exchange of differing perspectives, and through it there is the opportunity to question and perhaps grow in spiritual understanding. I appreciate that both the sense of common grace (in which God upholds and sustains all life) and the mystery of the spiritual journey (which might be started in a variety of ways) are to be approached with humility.

Conversational exchange with those who are different to oneself is enriching, since new ways of seeing and looking at the world might emerge. By exploring existential questions, and opening up an investigation of spiritual reality collaboratively, it may be possible to see how questions about faith, religion and spirituality are not simply resolved through dogma, but through engagement in the lives of others and the translation of convictions into human experience.

However, a genuine dilemma is that differences are not just between spirituality and religion, but also around the way in which the Christian faith is perceived and lived. Principe (1992 [online]) says that Christian spirituality, when understood as a lived experience, has 'many strands' (Principe, 1992, p.55 [online]). He recognises that since the early church<sup>4</sup> 'reflection on Jesus and his gospel called forth different responses as the gospel was preached, received,

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<sup>4</sup> The word church is capitalized when it refers to a specific denomination e.g. Catholic, or local church e.g. St. Helen's Church. It is not capitalised for: the body of Christians who comprise Christ's church; when it is part of general references to a place of communal worship or a faith environment e.g. evangelical church; a group of Christians who meet locally e.g. church community; and clerical government e.g. church and state. Direct quotations contain exceptions to this format.

and inculturated' (Principe, 1992, p.55 [online]). These strands show there has been variation in the way the gospel message has been expressed. There has been emphasis on different doctrinal factors, and varied ways of living the gospel, in different times, places and cultures.

Downey (1997) acknowledges that:

a great variety of Christian spiritualities [...] arise from different ways of perceiving and pursuing the highest ideals and ultimate values disclosed in and through Jesus Christ. (Downey, 1997, p.48)

He questions why this should be; a question that I resonate with. Downey answers:

If human beings are spirit in the world, then the specific world in which they live will color their perceptions. And this world in which human beings exist influences more than just the interior life [...] Therefore it is necessary to be mindful of the much wider *context* within which the human quest for self-transcendence is actualised and which the Holy Spirit is at work in *manifold ways*. (Downey, 1997, p.48, emphasis mine)

This suggests that the way in which a person engages with spiritual truth is always going to be unique. Principe (1992 [online]) agrees with this position. He recognises that when Christian spirituality is understood as a person's lived experience then it is:

completely pluralistic since no two persons live their Christian life in the Spirit in precisely the same way - each person's spirituality is unique and particular. (Principe, 1992, p.54 [online])

And yet, at the same time, there are some approaches to developing faith that can be agreed upon generally. How to discern what is important in a personal journey of Christian living is a core area of my investigation. In Chapter 4 I look at spiritual formation, and consider the journey of spiritual growth.

I became aware that some Christians find SAW problematic in 2008, when I attended an event for Christians who work in Human Resources (HR). One session explored SAW, and quotes and definitions of spirituality were taken from my co-authored book (Howard and Welbourn, 2004). A question in the room was: should Christians engage with the opportunities presented by the field of SAW and if so how? As a retrospective participant observer (Spradley, 1980) this event was catalytic for me. I recognised my need for a further exploration of Christian spirituality - how is Christian spirituality aligned with, or different from, more general descriptions of spirituality? I think it is imperative for Christians to be clear about this as the Bible indicates the need for discernment of spirits:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup>By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already

in the world. <sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.  
(1 John 4: 1-6)

Christians are warned to recognise the spirit of truth from the spirit of error, and are told to 'test everything' (I Thessalonians 5.21). The climate of questioning I experienced during the workshop gave me a growing sense of unease about my involvement in the SAW field, and this has compelled me to undertake further research and to pursue a PhD. An ongoing challenge for Christians is to determine how best to live their faith, since the Christian faith operates as a critique of the world - an important aspect for my thesis. Ultimately, my faith is pragmatic because it provides a basis of judgment about the quality, and outcomes, of my life. My own faith has changed over time, and with experience. I have come to appreciate that other Christians may interpret their faith differently to me, but the absolute significance of faith remains central. My faith is a core aspect of who I am; I want to understand my faith deeply in order to live in alignment with it. My thesis explores my personal journey, and some of the challenges that my faith has presented to me.

Bell, Taylor and Driscoll (2011) highlight the contribution of William James, who recognised religious belief was pragmatic:

James [...] insists that analysis of religious belief systems must refer to the patterns of behaviour they are likely to produce, in dialogue with the social world rather than as a detached or epistemologically distinctive theology.  
(Bell *et al*, 2011, p. 4)

James framed religion in terms of the practical way it made a difference to people's lives - that faith and belief help us to understand experience. The authors conclude:

On the epistemological status of religious faith James' position is clear; Faith itself is beyond argument [...] and therefore *only open to analysis through the difference it might make to an individual or organization*.  
(Bell *et al*, 2011, p.11, emphasis mine)

To understand a person's spirituality, it is vital to investigate the specific details of how a person lives out their spiritual beliefs. Bell *et al* suggest that 'debates surrounding religion in critical organizational theory do not take sufficient account of the complexity of belief systems' (Bell *et al*, 2011, p.10), and propose that:

scholars should be able to ask interpretive and ethical questions as to what *forms of religious experience mean to individuals and communities*, who benefits from them, who loses, and what the material effects of the religious beliefs are. (Bell *et al*, 2011, p.10, emphasis mine).

My thesis is grappling with this challenge, and I refined my research question as I considered: what difference does personal faith make to an individual, and what impact might this have on an organization<sup>5</sup>?

I explore SAW from within an evangelical Christian perspective, involving exploration of my own faith as the researcher, and that of specific Christians operating in particular contexts. Conducting personal research is emphasised as being an important form of inquiry in the field of SAW:

It is important to inquire into the correlation between one's personal spirituality and spiritual behaviour in the workplace in order to identify the relevance of types of spirituality for the expression of spirituality in the workplace [...] The results of investigating one's personal spirituality and its relation to spirituality in the workplace may enable us to determine the relationship between the type of spirituality that an individual practices and the individual's expectations regarding the role of the organization in one's spiritual life at work. (Lopez, *et al*, 2009, p.278)

It is because of the personal nature of my research inquiry, both the subject area and the methodological approach, that my research will, I hope, be valuable. Herr and Anderson (2005) emphasise that:

insider accounts generate important knowledge to be shared among practitioners [...] they begin to build a knowledge base that can inform the research community about the actions and beliefs of practitioners – a knowledge base that is otherwise unavailable. (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.34)

I have taken Fornaciari's and Lund Dean's (2009) advice:

MSR [Management, Spirituality and Religion] scholars should consider the dynamic diversity of definitions under the MSR umbrella and choose those which resonate with one's research sample, or one's own spiritual paradigm [...] getting bogged down, and worse, paralyzed by the multiplicity of spiritual paradigms will serve no-one well, least of all the researcher. (Fornaciari and Lund Dean, 2009, p.313)

I now share something of my own spiritual paradigm, and this will be developed further throughout my thesis.

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<sup>5</sup> Namely to me, and my client JK, and the organization we both worked with at that time - EPICC; as well as to one particular client - ACC.

### 1.5 Christian spirituality and why it matters to me

My thesis locates my spirituality in evangelical Christianity, and I discuss how I interpret this in relation to my work life. I have not examined in depth the broad range of spiritualities that exist which have both non-Christian and non-religious roots; although I accept that there are a variety of positions. I recognise myself as a spiritual 'dweller', rather than a 'seeker'; these are concepts clarified by Hill and Smith (2003), drawing on Wuthnow (1998). They discuss what it means to be a spiritual dweller, or a spiritual seeker:

A spirituality of dwelling emphasizes *habitation*: God occupies a definite place in the universe and creates a sacred space in which humans too can dwell; to inhabit sacred space is to know its territory and to feel secure. A spirituality of seeking emphasizes *negotiation*: individuals search for sacred moments that reinforce their conviction that the divine exists, but these moments are fleeting; rather than knowing their territory, people explore new spiritual vistas, and they may have to negotiate among complex and confusing meanings of spirituality.  
(Hill and Smith, 2003, p.239-240)

From my position as a spiritual dweller, I recognise the significance of the process of sanctification for believers.

Sanctification is the continuing development of a relationship with the triune God that follows justification, or conversion. Justification is based on Christ's righteousness being imputed to the person who is willing to receive Christ (as 2 Corinthians 5.21 and Romans 3.21-26 declare). Sanctification is an ongoing, participative, walk with God and involves the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing continuing grace to the believer; it requires the believer's ongoing cooperation in order to ensure they grow in spiritual maturity. Significantly for work environments, the scope of sanctification also includes God's redemptive purposes for his creation. Sanctification and spiritual formation are thought to be the same. Tang (2010 [online]) understands 'sanctification to be synonymous with Christian spiritual formation' (Tang, 2010, p.4 [online]), as does Willard (2002) who says that sanctification:

comes about through the process of spiritual formation, through which the heart (spirit, will) of the individual and the whole inner life take on the character of Jesus' inner life.  
(Willard, 2002, p.226)

In the SAW milieu, I am clear that my focus is on the spiritual formation of people from a Christian perspective. I explore spiritual formation more fully in Chapter 4, but I agree with Tang's (2010) working definition of spiritual formation:

[...] the intentional and ongoing process of inner transformation to become like Jesus Christ himself, to become with others a communal people of God, and to become an agent for God's redemptive purpose.  
(Tang, 2010. p.4 [online])

My questions are asked from a foundation of a faith life lived in Jesus, and as such, include an exploration of Christian spirituality. Principe (1992, p.54 [online]) presented spirituality as being capable of being understood in three ways: first - the real or existential level of lived experience, second - the spiritual doctrines and practices of significant groups or different spiritual traditions, and third - a discipline or study. My thesis is a representation of all three dimensions. As such, it affirms the view of Perrin (2007) who points out that studying Christian spirituality is 'self-implicating' (Perrin, 2007, p.7); my own life is under investigation as part of the reality under scrutiny. I am examining my own experience, and the influence of the evangelical tradition on my thinking, and through my research studying this area in personal depth.

A comprehensive attempt to define the territory of Christian spirituality is offered by Catholic theologian Perrin:

Christian spirituality is the experience of transformation in the Divine-human relationship as modeled by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality is appropriated as a lifestyle within all relationships in the broader Christian community as well as in society in general. While Christian spirituality embraces Christian traditions and beliefs, it also exceeds the boundaries of established religions and their theologies. As such Christian spirituality is always open to new and unexpected expressions of the way the Spirit of God is actively incarnated in human history, whether within the Christian traditions or outside them.  
(Perrin, 2007, p.32)

Perrin's (2007) insights include:

one of the most interesting characteristics of Christian spirituality as lived experience is its capacity to be outside or even ahead of theological developments and to introduce into the theological and/or religious purview [...] insights and convictions which stretch the received theological categories and paradigms.  
(Perrin, 2007, p.32)

I have found Perrin's work valuable as I have become more reflective and studious about what exactly it is that I have experienced and why it is so significant to me to pursue this study. He speaks of the relationship between theology and spirituality in a refreshing way:

the Holy Spirit is always accomplishing new things in people's lives and in the world. It is not desirable to reduce Christian spirituality to what is known already in theology.  
(Perrin, 2007, p.33)

The uniqueness of each person's life lived under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit is what excites and animates my passion to support spiritual formation. Christianity is more than an historic tradition; it is new each day to each person. My evangelical perspective is a living dynamic in which I believe it is possible to stir up the spiritual life and support and deepen the truth of faith in both my own life and that of others.

## 1.6 My rationale for adopting action research as a methodology

Action research fits my personal inquiry into the nature of Christian spiritual experience.

Coghlan (2014) writes:

the Christian approach to spirituality views God as one who is active in the world and who invites individuals and communities to seek and find God in the experience of their own lives and of the world and to respond in action.  
(Coghlan, 2014, p.92)

Coghlan and Brannick's (2010, p.8) action research cycle consists of: constructing (drawing from context and purpose), planning action, taking action, and evaluating action. The action research cycle relates to four kinds of knowing: experience, expression, understanding and practice, all of which can be applied to Christian spirituality (Coghlan, 2014). This connects to Cottrell's (2011) definition of spirituality, 'How encounter with God is *experienced*, nurtured and *expressed*' (emphasis mine). Action research can help me to add a layer of understanding to my practice.

Action research incorporates a commitment to social purposes (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.24). This is particularly true for Christians, for whom:

The work towards social justice for marginalized and excluded persons, for social, political and economic structures that contribute to the development of people rather than their enslavement [...] is a process that may begin from the first person inquiry of the practising Christian, who engages in second person inquiry and contributes to a broader development of a struggle for justice in other groups and communities. In this manner spirituality is not an inward-focused experience for the development of the individual only but one that challenges individuals to live a just life themselves and to have a personal spirituality that is both individual and social by having a concern-in-action for others and for the transformation of the world.  
(Coghlan, 2014, p.93)

Using action research as a qualitative methodology, informed by practical theology (which I explain in section 2.4), has enabled me to inquire, deeply and reflectively, into my professional practice as a Christian consultant. I have used action research to understand the practical application of Christian spirituality in organizational contexts; I have worked with colleagues 'to propose new courses of action' (Riel, 2012, p.1 [online]) in an attempt to improve work practices. Whilst I recognise my own view as subjective, I have sought to develop my understanding by drawing on multiple perspectives. I explain action research as a methodology further in Chapter 2.

Whitehead (2011[online]) refers to both Polanyi (and Habermas) in relation to the validity of knowledge. Polanyi (1958) emphasised that we need to commit to gaining personal

knowledge, and that this requires us to take personal responsibility in order to ‘search for the truth and state (our) findings’ (Polanyi, 1958, p. 299). For Polanyi this meant ‘I must understand the world from my point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent’ (Polanyi, 1958, p.327). My thesis seeks to understand the world from my point of view. Yet as my research is embedded in practice conducted in the public (universal) domain, it also creates knowledge for three audiences which Reason and Marshall (2001) identify as: first, second and third person. First person, for *me*, ‘the process and outcomes respond directly to the individual researcher’s being-in-the-world, and so elicit the response “that’s exciting” taking exciting back to its root meaning, to set in action’. Second person, for *us*, ‘it responds to concerns for our praxis, is relevant and timely, and so produces the response “that works!” from those who are struggling with problems in their field of action’. Third person, for *them*, ‘it produces some kind of generalisable ideas and outcomes which elicit the response “that’s interesting!” from those who are concerned to understand a similar field’ (Reason and Marshall, 2001, p.413).

Action inquiry opens up the possibilities for researchers to access multiple forms of knowledge, in addition to the empirical and conceptual (Heron and Reason, 1997). The multi-dimensional approach to knowledge encompasses an extended epistemology, which Heron and Reason (1997) describe as experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. Thus action research involves personal engagement by the researcher, which makes self-awareness and self-management critical elements of the inquiry. Action research is personal as it intersects with ‘one’s own growth areas and values and beliefs’ (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.69). Yet even though I am developing my ability to be critical of myself, my argument is located within the field of SAW. As I become clearer about what it is that I am doing, why I am doing it and the underpinning theoretical frames I am using, my research will contribute original knowledge to a field which is developing very rapidly.

### **1.7 The structure of my thesis**

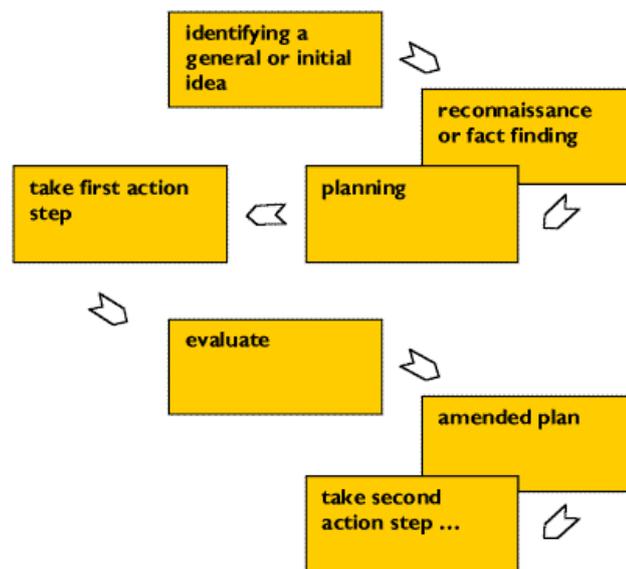
Creating a sense of direction within action research is not straightforward. The messy complexity of action research is described thus, ‘In action research one starts in the middle and ends in the middle’ (van Beinum, 1999, cited in Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.128). Throughout my thesis different levels or layers of research are unfolding. At a high-level, the entire research process is a large-scale action research inquiry. Then there are the micro-level cycles of action research which give insight into specific groups of people and situations. There is

also the sense of action research being a continuous cycle of learning, as I reflect on what emerges and change the focus of my inquiry and analysis. Action research can be ambiguous and messy as it is immersed in ongoing change. It is important to emphasise the impact of action research on writing my thesis since:

there are multiple layers to the data analysis process: the initial meaning making, including some decisions regarding directions [...] for actions; and then revisiting the data for a more thorough holistic understanding.  
(Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.81)

The writing phase of my action research has in itself supported my learning.

Smith (2007, p.4-5 [online]) depicts action research as reiterative phases of exploring, planning, acting and reflecting on action (see Figure 1). The diagram indicates different turns of thinking and development, but as Smith argues, the process is not as linear as the diagram might suggest. This has been true of my experience from the inception of this research project to the writing of my thesis, the thinking, planning, acting and reflecting have cycled round in loops, taking place in short bursts and over longer periods of time.



**Figure 1: An action research cycle as depicted by Smith, M K, 2007, [online]**

This chapter has served as an entry point and an orientation to my research project. I have reviewed some of the SAW literature as I have considered the complexity within the SAW field and what this project means to me. In Chapter 2 I explain my methodological approach, action research, and why it suits the investigation of my research question. I provide descriptions of the three phases of action research through which I have developed my understanding of

myself in relation to my working context: phase one - my historical action research; phase two - the four new action research cycles I undertook, and phase three – critical reflective analysis resulting from writing this thesis.

My four, specific, action research cycles led to an identification of five topics from the data that generated deeper inquiry, and from my inquiry five themes emerged. Chapter 3 examines the first three topics: Firstly, transformation, from which the theme of ‘my evangelical Christian perspective’ emerged. Secondly, whether spirituality needs to be explicitly Christian, from which the theme of ‘the grace of God’ emerged. Thirdly, the topic of: the impact of Christian spirituality on our consultancy ideas was examined, which led me to identify ‘resistance and sin’ as a theme. Chapter 4 examines the fourth, combined, topic of: spiritual mentoring and spiritual formation. I explore ‘how I can enable spiritual formation’ as a theme. Chapter 5 explores the fifth topic: Christian applications of leadership in relation to the ACC case study. The theme of ‘complex combinations of faith in relation to work’ stems from this.

In Chapter 6 I summarise my learning. I consider what insights into the dilemmas of faith in relation to work have emerged from this project. I determine what contribution my research has made to new knowledge. I identify some of the limitations of my research, and conclude my thesis.

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Overview of Chapter 2**

This chapter positions my research within the wider methodological field of qualitative research. I explain my understanding of action research, and in particular practical theology, as I give priority to Christian spirituality within knowledge creation. I give details of the three phases of my action research inquiry, and an overview of the four action research cycles which form my central research method. I describe various methods of analysis used to support reflexivity, including theological reflection, narrative inquiry, and autoethnography. I offer some criteria on how to judge the quality of my work.

### **2.2 Qualitative research and action research**

Qualitative Research (QR) as a methodological approach supports a subjective inquiry. It encompasses the notion that ‘knowledge cannot be separated from the knower’ (Steedman, 1991, cited in Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.1), and that ‘data and facts are the constructions or results of interpretation’ (Steedman, 1991, cited in Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.1). Any yet, ‘the existence of reality’ (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.3), which lies beyond the researcher, means researchers ‘should be able to say something insightful about this reality’ (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.3). Social reality is thus both an internal (subjective) and external (objective) phenomenon.

The way in which social reality is constructed and represented by researchers can be problematic as the role of language, interpretation and selectivity in research work varies widely. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) advocate for research that is both reflexive and empirical. Generally:

Qualitative Research is multi-method in focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.  
(Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.3)

The following elements of QR are incorporated in my research:

*Reflexive Analysis:* Paying attention to my own processes of constructing the world;

*Hermeneutical/Interpretive:* Exploring the basic set of beliefs that guide my action;

*Phenomenological:* Giving reflective attentiveness to an individual’s (my own) lived experience;

*Constructivist:* Realising I am an active participant and co-creator of the research (and of my reality);

*Participatory:* Recognising that I am researching *with* others.

I have, however, been conscious about finding an approach to research which is appropriate for exploring Christian spirituality in relation to work. Making sense of social reality is significant for my research because: it is 'not methods but ontology and epistemology which are the determinants of good social science' (Alvesson and Sköldböck, 2000, p.4); and spirituality is evident in ontology, as Whitehead and McNiff (2006) state, 'We understand our ontological values as the deeply spiritual connections between ourselves and others' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.86). How social reality is understood impacts organizational contexts, as Chia (2000) writes, 'organizational action is first and foremost an ontological activity' (cited in Willmott, 2005, p.764).

Ontology is a 'theory of being [which] helps us to understand how and why we live our lives as we do' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.86). Our ontological values become standards of judgment by which we can determine how to choose, or assess the choices we have made, and how well we are living. Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p.87) say this 'is a deeply moral activity which involves critical reflection and discernment'. Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005) suggest that ontology is concerned with the nature of the knower; that it is about our place in the world, our identity and embodied experiences which impact the way we see the world. The content of my inquiry is deeply aligned with this.

Epistemology is the philosophical theory of knowledge. Partially it is about how we justify our beliefs and what counts as knowledge in our world view. It is the lens or perspective we use to make sense of how the world works. Epistemologically, my research appears subjective, as I am interested in exploring how what is known by an individual (me) is applied, that is how my spirituality is lived out in practice. The credibility of subjective knowledge is justified, defended and espoused by many including Polanyi (1958); Schön (1983); and Gladwell (2005). The subjective, interpretive, nature of reality has been demonstrated, in recent times, through post-modernism. I have found considerations of epistemology hard, and it has been confusing to work out what I think and where I fit. How do we come to know anything? Knowing is not simply knowledge about (comprehension) but also encompasses knowledge of (apprehension). Reality is not just subjective, it is also objective.

The spectrum between reality as objective and/or subjective is a continuing source of reflection and debate and one with theological implications. Former Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright (1992) wrote:

I propose a form of *critical realism*. This is a way of describing the process of “knowing” that acknowledges the *reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (hence “realism”), while fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (hence “critical”).  
(Wright, N T, 1992, p.35)

Critical realism (influenced by the works of Bhaskar) stands against both empirical realism (positivism), and transcendental idealism (constructivism). It recognizes ontology attempts to say something about actual things themselves, it is not simply about our beliefs, experiences, or our current knowledge and understanding of those things. Like Tom Wright I can see that critical realism provides a means of resolution. My Christian perspective brings a revealed truth about an apparently objective reality. There is an objective standpoint: the world exists outside our knowledge of it (realism); and yet also, we have a subjective experience of the world. Both view-points shape our perceptions of what constitutes social reality, and we carry our reference points about reality into our working lives. When knowledge of social reality is also explored in the light of critical theory (influenced by the Frankfurt School), ideology is signaled as the principle obstacle to human liberation. Clearly, how we perceive, discern, interpret, make judgments and think about the world impacts how we live. It is important to investigate our worldview; and from a Christian perspective, our worldview is theologically significant.

This tension between the outer world, and our inner world, is pivotal to my research. I want more than to understand intellectually, I am interested in making a difference through my work. The tension for me is that my Christian perspective brings with it an awareness of revealed truth about spiritual reality and this underpins and shapes my awareness. My judgment is affected by knowledge gained from the Bible, and wider Christian community. What is important for me to consider is how I translate my understanding of biblical truth into my own life, and how my understanding impacts others.

I gravitated to action research as an overarching methodological approach to knowledge creation, as it offered me a way to explore my practice. Action research is underpinned by an extended epistemology which means we draw on diverse forms of knowing as we encounter, and act in, the world. This makes sense to me as it is holistic and encompasses strands of inquiry that are important to me, such as meaning, participation and involvement in the lives of others.

### 2.3 What is action research?

Defining action research is not simple. Reason and Bradbury (2001) provide a working definition as:

Action Research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world view [...] It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.  
(Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p.1)

They describe action research as a practice for:

the systematic development of knowing and of knowledge, but based in a rather different form from traditional academic research – it has different purposes, is based in different relationships, and has different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice. These are fundamental differences in our understanding of the nature of inquiry, not simply methodological niceties.  
(Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p.1)

My action research: has encompassed a conversational process in partnership with others; has taken place in different contexts; has addressed real-life problems through collaborative processes; has been enriched by the diversity of experience contributed by others; and, reflection on action has led to new meaning and new actions. These are points that Cameron *et al* (2010, p.36) affirm as being important. Critical reflection is at the heart of action research and can lead to three outcomes: *first person* - personal learning; *second person* - organizational learning; and, *third person* - knowledge from findings shared with the scholarly community.

Learning how to be reflective, and reflexive, as a result of action research has been challenging for me. 'Reflective research has two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection' (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.5). Interpretation calls for awareness of theoretical perspectives and how philosophical ideas are linked to empirical work, and reflection turns research inwards towards the researcher, their community, society, and culture and 'the central importance [...] of narrative in the research context' (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.5-6). Levels of reflexivity incorporate the way in which empirical material is handled, and interpreted, along with acknowledgement of the political and ideological context, and how the authority of the researcher is presented. To encourage reflexivity I have embedded literature within my analysis of the action research cycles. I have drawn on narrative methods of reflexive analysis including narrative inquiry, and autoethnography.

Narrative inquiry (or research) involves working with narrative materials (signs that convey meaning) and analysing, or trying to interpret, that material. Narratives convey stories and can be examined by focusing on their truth, content or context (Squire *et al*, 2014). I am taking a 'pragmatic direction, choosing theories, methodologies, data and modes of analysis that are not unique to any one approach' (Squire *et al*, 2014, p.10), whilst also attempting to remain aware of the differences between approaches. It is not a simple process as it is not possible 'to be definitive about what narrative research is' (Squire *et al*, 2014, p.13). The field of narrative research allows for subjectivity, agency and action to be under consideration, recognizing that ambiguity exists between 'research' and 'practice'. Since narratives and their co-construction are not limited to personal stories, but take place through interaction with others, narrative inquiry has supported me as I have tried to make sense of second person learning. I have drawn on narrative inquiry as a method to reflect on my first three action research cycles.

Autoethnography is both a methodology and a method (Short, Turner and Grant, 2013), but I have been influenced by it as a method. It has given me the confidence to be both reflective and reflexive to support first-person learning, and has provided legitimacy for writing subjectively. Autoethnography has helped me to recognize the situated nature of my inquiry, and how 'the story might change, develop and grow [...] as the author authors and re-authors their writing' (Short, Turner and Grant, 2013, p.2). This mainly autobiographical approach allows for self-consciousness and introspection which has supported me, the researcher, to access myself as a vulnerable observer in the story being told. I have experimented with this method in order to reveal the first-hand knowledge I have of my subject area, and to uncover the meanings available from my inner life. I have drawn on an autoethnographic approach as I have shared thoughts, feelings and experiences which I would not normally share in public. This approach has been pertinent as I consider the learning from my fourth action research cycle in Chapter 5.

Action research is my overriding methodological approach, even though it is not simple to define. Kurt Lewin, widely recognized as the founding father of Organization Development (OD)<sup>6</sup>, first used the term action research in 1944. If research is about learning in a focused way, then action research is about taking action in the world and learning from it so that the action is informed. 'Action research is an approach to research *rather than a particular set of methods*. Any single definition runs the risk of over-simplification' (Cameron *et al*, 2010, p.36,

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<sup>6</sup> OD is described as organization improvement through action research (French and Bell, 1994)

emphasis mine). With a central process of investigation located within action research, and with recognition of my need to be reflective, I discovered that the area of practical theology can help me with both.

## **2.4 Practical Theology**

A branch of theology, practical theology, has been clearly linked with action research, 'Practical Theology presents a quite specific form of action research with a particular understanding of the nature and purpose of action' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.255). Practical theology differs from other forms of action research because the learning it considers expresses an underpinning theological position, 'Practical Theology seeks in explicit and varied ways to enable the Christian practitioner to articulate faith, to speak of God, in practice' (Cameron *et al*, 2010, p. 21).

Practical theology encourages the transmission of 'theology into people's real lives' (Jaison, 2010, p.5 [online]). Jinkins (2001) describes theology as seeking to address the question of 'who is God?' (Jinkins, 2001, p.44) - an essential foundation. Theology is:

First and foremost simply our bearing witness to a particular person: Jesus of Nazareth whom we believe to be the Christ. [...] Christian theology is that exercise of heart and mind, that rush to bring our critical and constructive powers of reflection to bear on a relationship with a person who challenges us to redefine what we mean by so many of the words we commonly use, words like God and humanity, Creator and creation, Word and world, Spirit and spirituality. Theology is an attempt to account for this relationship with Jesus Christ.  
(Jinkins, 2001, p.44-45)

The emphasis of practical theology is that it is a branch of theology which:

is concerned with questions of truth in relation to action. This points to deep reciprocity between theory and practice whereby theological understanding not only leads to action, but also arises out of practice, involvement in the life of the world.  
(Forrester, 2000, p.16)

Practical theology focuses on praxis, or practical application of theory. Because practical theology offers a methodology to examine theological issues as part of everyday situations, it provides a way of doing theology which is available to everyone. Encountering practical theology has given me confidence about how to inquire into the gap between my spiritual beliefs and my consultancy work; it has given me a sense of legitimacy about using scripture within my research, and as part of my reflexive processes.

Practical theology combines faith, practice and social reality in order to 'raise people's consciousness to previously hidden dimensions of everyday situations' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.16). The living out of Christian faith is an *interpretive* experience which:

raises new questions, offers challenges and demands answers of the gospel which are not always obvious [...] Human experience is [...] an important locus for the work of the Spirit.

(Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.6)

SAW is one arena in which the hidden dimensions of daily life are brought to people's awareness, and practical theology provides a way to address such spiritual dimensions. For Christians, this spirituality, found in the concrete reality and action of daily living, has a theological foundation.

Examining spirituality in context creates challenging questions about the nature of truth and reality. Swinton and Mowat (2006) suggest that practical theology's primary task is to ensure and enable faithful living and to highlight the radical nature of the Christian life:

We live in a world created by God within which some notice this fact and others are oblivious to it [...] All human beings, implicitly or explicitly, participate in the unfolding historical narrative of God [...] All human beings, including the church, fall short of the good purposes of God [...] However, there is also a radical dissimilarity and discontinuity. The church differs from the world [it] recognises who Jesus is and seeks to live its life in the light of this revelation.

(Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.8)

The differences between a non-believer and a Christian may be hard to spot. On the surface many things may appear similar, but at the foundational core of a Christian is, at least potentially, a theologically reflective life.

Practical theology offers a variety of tools to support the *doing* of research. It addresses issues such as:

working from experience; drawing on the social sciences and relating them to theology; what is meant by theological reflection; and how action and spirituality inform each other.

(Ballard and Pritchard, 1996, p.81)

The core tool is the pastoral cycle, described by Ballard and Pritchard (1996, p.85) as fourfold action:

*Experience:* The starting point is the present situation; the more-or-less routine existence of a given context. But when this present is interrupted, by events (whether from within or outside) that demand a response, or uncover a tension, it is no longer possible to go on as before.

*Exploration:* Any considered response must be based on an analysis of what is going on. This demands information and discussion. Much of that will come out of the experience of those involved. It may be that more information has to be gathered from outside sources, or advice taken from experts.

*Reflection:* Information, by itself does not give answers; it only indicates possibilities. Other matters have to be taken into consideration, such as personal and communal beliefs about how the world works, the purpose of life, moral values as to what is important and worth pursuing. Reflection also includes discovery and change. It is part of being willing to recognise that all is not well; of acknowledging how things really are and not how we suppose them or wish them to be. Only then is it possible to take up a different, more realistic and creative stance. Perceptions, beliefs and values face the challenge of being in touch with contemporary realities.

*Action:* This comes out of the whole process on the basis of informed decisions and appropriate initiatives.

The cycle is reiterative and begins again at a new place as individuals and situations change.

Cameron and her co-authors (2010) devised *Theological Action Research* (TAR) which supports a *group* exploration of theology, and extensively links action research with practical theology; it also includes a four-fold cycle of learning, action, experience, and reflection. The primary characteristic of TAR is 'its fundamental [...] commitment to the idea that the research done into faith practices is "theological all the way through"' (Cameron *et al*, 2010, p.51). This means that all material, written and unwritten, textual and practical, is potentially theology as practice itself is regarded as:

its own proper "articulation" of theological conviction and insight. Practices of Christian people are themselves the bearers of theology; they express the contemporary living tradition of the Christian faith.  
(Cameron *et al*, 2010, p.51)

Practical theology adds further value to my inquiry, in its emphasis on action, since, as Tang (2015a [online]) recognizes, action is an important aspect of Christian spirituality:

Christian spirituality is the process of spiritual formation of a disciple of Jesus Christ for an authentic and fulfilled Christian life in the present world; involving bringing together the fundamental tenets of the Christian truths and the experience of living in God's presence, grace and love in our daily life. It is Trinitarian, incarnational and grace-filled living. It is theology in action.  
(Tang, 2015a, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph [online])

The tying together of Christian spirituality, spiritual formation, and action, with incarnational living makes sense to me. Practical theology is not simply useful as research methodology, but it can be used to help to deepen the Christian instinct. It can enable a life to become more deeply transformed spiritually, as it helps to embed Christian faith in the mind and heart.

Ballard and Pritchard, (1996), drawing on the work of Edward Farley, refer to this as *habitus*:

“*Habitus*” has the basic meaning of the more usual word “habit” [...] a good habit [...] is so ingrained that it has got beyond deliberate ethical choice. We act well because that disposition is there, part of the soul [...] Such a disposition of the heart cannot be taught, but it may begin to grow because there are occasions and opportunities to learn, reflect, contemplate and pray. It is part of our personal journey, of being open to the Spirit. It is good therefore, to remember that Practical Theology is not only about the demands of discipleship and the task of the church in the world. It is not only about the needs of persons and communities. It is also about oneself, of growing into Christ and of living in the fellowship of the saints. It is also about losing oneself in God.

(Ballard and Pritchard, 1996, p.73-75)

*Habitus* is also associated with French sociologist Bourdieu who used the term to indicate that the culture of a particular social group is embodied (internalised) in the individual during the socialisation process (Richardson, 2017 [online]). Our *habitus* shapes our understanding of ourselves; it affects the way we interpret, and act in, everyday life. Swinton and Mowat (2006) use a related term *phronesis*:

A form of practical wisdom which combines theory and practice in the praxis of individuals and communities. *Phronesis* [aims] for an embodied, practical knowledge which will enable a particular form of God-oriented lifestyle.

(Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.26)

The notions of embodied, incarnational living are linked to the concept of being a spiritual dweller which I mentioned in Chapter 1.5.

The concepts of *habitus*, *phronesis*, and the notion of being a spiritual dweller, are useful to me as I attempt to understand my Christian perspective, and how it impacts the whole of my life, and in particular my work life. By taking the reality of people’s experience as a starting point, practical theology is able to guide thoughts towards theological reflection. I look at what that might involve below.

#### 2.4.1 Theological reflection

There are a variety of theological reflection methods. Cameron *et al* (2010) observe that there appears to be:

a separation of theology and practice in the life and work of many Christian people today. At the heart of such separation lies the difficulty of integrating theology and practice in an authentic unity of living faith.  
(Cameron *et al*, 2010, p.18)

Cameron *et al* (2010) offer a model of *The Four Voices of Theology* (Figure 2) to show various theological aspects of reflection:

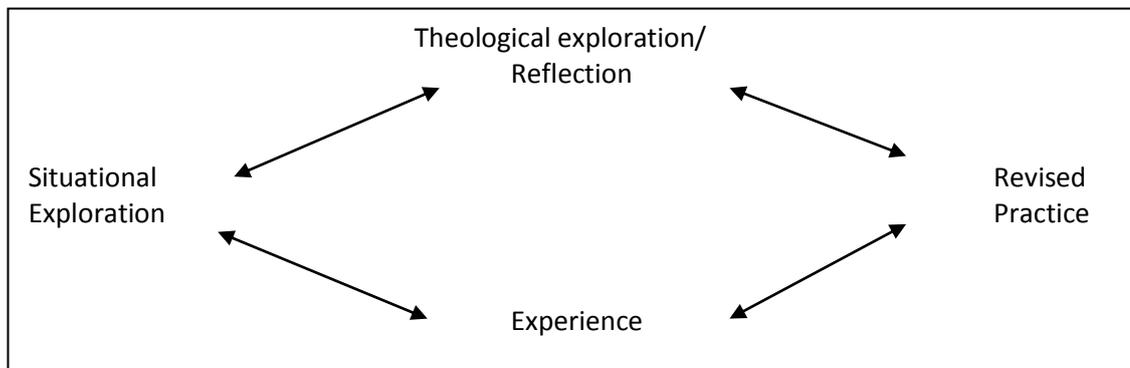
NORMATIVE THEOLOGY Scriptures The Creeds Official Church Teaching Liturgies	FORMAL THEOLOGY The theology of theologians Dialogue with other disciplines
ESPOUSED THEOLOGY The theology embedded within a group's articulation of its beliefs	OPERANT THEOLOGY The theology embedded within the actual practices of a group

**Figure 2: *The Four Voices of Theology*, adapted from Cameron *et al*, 2010, p.54**

An important contribution of *The Four Voices of Theology* model is that it can show how people are living contradictions. Whilst people might hold certain values, at times they also live in denial of these values:

By naming and recognising theological connections across the four voices, the theological embodiment at the operant level in particular will be renewed as its own authentic message comes to light and is more clearly understood by those living it out. In part this happens through the empowerment of discovering and forming a language for the often hidden depths of what we do.  
(Cameron *et al*, 2010, p.58)

A model of theological reflection, described as Mutual Critical Conversation (see Figure 3), is provided by Pattison (1989, cited in Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.81).



**Figure 3: A model of theological reflection: Pattison's Mutual Critical Conversation, adapted from Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.81**

The conversation takes place between the Christian tradition, the social sciences and the particular situation that is being addressed. Swinton and Mowat (2006) describe it as follows:

He [Pattison] bases his model of theological reflection on the metaphor of a conversation between friends; friends who have differences and who have much in common and much to learn from one another. This conversation [...] is in the spirit of an open dialogue, which genuinely seeks after truth.  
(Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.80-81)

Swinton and Mowat (2006) identify the value of this approach for the practical theologian, who can begin to explore situations using differing sources of knowledge. Qualitative methods can uncover 'hidden meanings' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.81) within situations and practices that participants embark on in response to their particular understandings of the world. Such a complex engagement in research can develop knowledge in diverse ways as the:

data with all of its challenges, contradictions and surprises is then taken into constructive dialogue with *scripture and tradition* with a view to developing revised forms of practice that will impact upon and transform the original situation. Within the model of critical correlation, the data acquired from qualitative research has an equal voice within the conversation and can challenge theology and tradition in exactly the same way as theology and tradition can challenge its findings.  
(Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.81-82, emphasis mine)

This approach to research contains all sorts of possibilities. One is that it gives the practical theologian 'prophetic freedom to challenge established interpretations of scripture and tradition [in] specific forms of practice' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.82). The various options around theological reflection show that theological understanding can be emergent and dialectic, something in which is personally experienced. The potential for growth in personal understanding, through the application of revealed knowledge, is significant for my research. Whilst theology is authoritative, and as Jaison (2010 [online]) highlights, 'Practical Theology has to be intentional in its emphasis on Scriptural centrality' (Jaison, 2010, p.5 [online]), the ways in which theology and revelation are 'interpreted, embodied and worked out' (Jaison, 2010, p.89 [online]) are influenced by specific individual and communal contexts. I see this as being helpful for those in leadership roles, since critical conversations can open up the opportunity for tremendous levels of self-awareness and reflexivity. Such conversations might support people to recognise their own social constructs, which, when combined with reflection on theology, can form an important developmental approach to leadership. This connection is relevant, as I seek to use qualitative research as a means to examine conversations in which people are supported to think about their leadership roles in light of theological truths.

#### 2.4.2 Prioritising Christian spirituality within knowledge creation

Theological and spiritual questions underpin my action research inquiry. Theology by itself is not the only way to engage in reflections about life with God. Sheldrake (1998) emphasises that spirituality and theology have over time become separated. Whilst he recognises that both are necessary, in that talk about the Christian doctrine of God cannot be separated from personal faith and spiritual experience, he argues in favour of spirituality as the more significant of the two since:

a theology which is alive is always grounded in spiritual experience [...] Theology needs to be *lived* just as much as it needs to be studied and explained.  
(Sheldrake, 1998, p.3)

In his writing about Christian spirituality he emphasises 'Jesus as *the* basic reference point' (Sheldrake, 1998, p.15) as this belief 'embodies a specific understanding of God and God's self-disclosure' (Sheldrake, 1998, p.15). He clarifies that:

the point of seeking doctrinal clarity is always to express, promote and protect a quite distinctive experience of God along with its practical implications for life and prayer.  
(Sheldrake, 1998, p.15)

When it comes to examining knowledge and understanding of the spiritual life, recognising Jesus is *the* central reference point identifies that spiritual knowledge is linked to a question which Sheldrake (1998) recognises lies at the heart of Christian spirituality, 'Christian spirituality attempts to respond to the question "What kind of God do we have *and what difference does it make to us?*"' (Sheldrake, 1998, p.15, emphasis mine). Whatever our views about God, the consequences of our answers to that question are of immense significance as, 'All human statements about God have *practical implications; we live what we affirm.*' Ineffective or even destructive spiritualities inevitably reflect inadequate theologies of God' (Sheldrake, 1998, p.15, emphasis mine). The central reference point of Jesus means that when thinking about any knowledge, my Christian perspective will steer me to discern, what is revealed about God within it.

By acknowledging that my Christian identity influences how I am reflective about my practice, in this academic process of knowledge construction, I am a living representation of the argument of Habermas (1971) which was that knowledge production is never neutral, but always pursued with some interest in mind. According to Herr and Anderson (2005), Habermas pointed out that knowledge and human interests were inseparable (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.27). Habermas presented three distinct interests amongst researchers in the pursuit of knowledge creation which were: technical, practical and emancipatory. Of those

three, my approach to knowledge creation is practical; I have an orientation towards gaining understanding through interpretation. Interpretive methodologies, 'primarily hermeneutic interpretation' (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.27), are used to illuminate understanding of a given situation, and the research participants, in order to generate knowledge that informs and guides practical judgments. Hermeneutical methods associated with practical interest include: textual, conversation and discourse analysis. These are set against a backdrop of critical theory, which seeks to engage people in public self reflection in order to transform their world.

My struggle to determine the most appropriate form of research to inquire into spirituality is part of a wider, ongoing, debate. Herr and Anderson (2005) comment that although 'there is much talk about reflection and reflexivity few accounts of how this is done in action research exist' (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.26). A timely volume of the JMSR presents a review of the field of SAW over a decade, and outlines some of the issues that remain difficult for researchers. Lopez *et al* (2009) recognise:

An important issue in the academic research on spirituality and organizations concerns the type of discourse and research methodology that it is appropriate to use when studying the integration of spirituality in the workplace (Benefiel, 2003).  
(Lopez, *et al*, 2009, p.276)

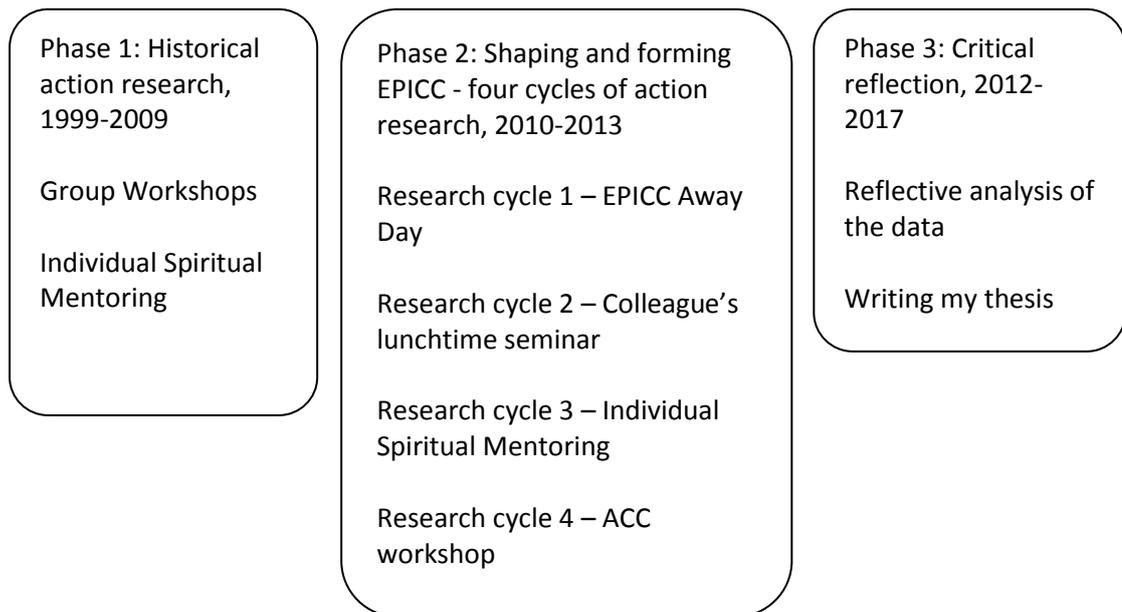
In the same volume, Geh and Tan (2009), comment, 'Management, Spirituality and Religion (MSR) research should [...] be productively informed by many other research disciplines, both methodologically and theoretically' (Geh and Tan, 2009, p.289). Fornarciari and Lund Dean (2009) emphasise, 'It is imperative to ground new research in [the understanding that] the links between attitude, beliefs, and subsequent behaviours should not be taken for granted' (Fornarciari and Lund Dean, 2009, p.315). They also highlight that 'there is almost nothing in the business literature about [...] *self-examination*' (Fornarciari and Lund Dean, 2009, p.316-317, emphasis mine). Fornaciari and Lund Dean suggest that researchers should challenge assumptions and investigate the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those working in the SAW field. They make the link with work, 'there are certainly lessons to be examined about how spirituality or religion can be operationalised in a business setting' (Fornarciari and Lund Dean, 2009, p.317). They also suggest that research into how managers are educated or trained to deal with spirituality in the workplace is needed; research which might explore how managers can deal with the organization-level implications of spiritual and religious practice. SAW research should help to understand the impact of spirituality on professional practice, with investigation focusing on how it is applied.

In order to understand the impact of spirituality on professional practice, and in particular to incorporate self-examination into my inquiry, it has been essential to expand on areas that are normally confidential, and kept hidden, in my research cycles. With regard to gathering data, I have complied with university guidance on research ethics. It is important to note that I obtained signed ethical permission from individual participants; they gave me their approval to use transcripts of our work for my research purposes. I also obtained signed ethical approval from the organization that I feature, provided that I anonymised the data, which I have done. However, I am aware that there remains the issue of professional ethics, particularly in relation to the disclosure of information resulting from my work with EPICC, and the one-to-one spiritual mentoring research cycle. In my normal work operation, as a spiritual mentor, I would adhere to a confidential approach such as that outlined by the Christian Coaches Network (Christian Coaches Network, 2017). However, within this project my research has given public access to the spiritual lives of individuals; people who see the need for attention to be given to the spiritual life within work. As such the research participants willingly agreed for me to use the content of our discussions as part of my research analysis.

I am being as open and transparent as I can about my research agenda, and my engagement with participants and contexts. I am using self-examination to give a self-reflective account of how one practitioner has learned through action research and I am sharing my learning. My research position demonstrates first person learning, whereby knowledge creation stems from improved/critiqued practice and personal/professional transformation. However as an insider I have collaborated with other insiders, and thus my research approach has implications for second and third person learning, whereby knowledge creation encompasses improved/critiqued group practice, and the resultant effect on attempts at organizational transformation.

## **2.5 The three phases of my action research**

Taking an action research approach has been deeply formational, reflecting my ontological approach. I have seen myself 'as part of other people's lives, and they of [mine]' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.23); my inquiry has been reciprocal. I consider that my action research has taken place in three broad, overlapping, phases, as depicted in Figure 4:



**Figure 4: My three phases of action research**

Phase one has its foundation in work completed prior to becoming a PhD student; my work stimulated me to question my practice. In phase two I tested out my perspective and approach to practice, with colleagues and clients, in four main cycles of research inquiry. Phase three has been devoted to reflective analysis, and to the construction of my thesis; I have structured my ideas to gain clarity about what is emerging. The three phases are described below in order to show how my practice has been participative, and involved mutual relationships of influence.

*2.5.1 Phase 1: Historical action research, 1999 to 2009*

This account of my personal history contextualizes my prior work in relation to my research inquiry. It shows how I gained entry into my research contexts; how relationships have been established; how my roles have been negotiated; and how I established rapport and credibility with my research participants. The research philosophy of ‘narrative methods’ and ‘narrative inquiry’ (Boje, 2001; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) affirms that story is an important element of research design. By telling my story, I also express something of the spiritual energy which is motivating this research project.

My career in training and development of people has taken place in college<sup>7</sup>, university<sup>8</sup> and office settings<sup>9</sup>. I have discovered that approaches to people development are multi-

<sup>7</sup> I worked as Training Coordinator for West Herts College.

<sup>8</sup> I worked as Business Development Manager at Cranfield University School of Management.

<sup>9</sup> I worked as Management Development Manager for World Vision, UK.

disciplinary in scope. When I worked in a business school I began to ask questions of the management development agenda. My main question was: why is spiritual development not explicitly being addressed? It was my Christian outlook that underpinned my motivation to become critical.

Critical theory strongly supports the ideal of the independent critical researcher [...] One guideline for the independent researcher is to pose various research questions that certain elite groups are reluctant to have answered, but which might be crucial from the perspective of some disadvantaged group.  
(Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.132)

Whilst Christians may not be readily identified as a *disadvantaged group*, it is possible to see how questions that Christians may ask could be challenging to the *elite groups* like business schools who offer leadership development. This is an area recently addressed by Mabey and Mayrhofer (2015). The outworking of my critical questioning at that time can be seen in my Master's dissertation (Howard, 2000), where I explored what role spirituality plays in the development of people and how it influences learning. It was here that I first experimented with action research. I convened a collaborative inquiry group to consider the implications of spirituality for leaders and organizations. In a subsequent article (Howard, S, 2002) I drew on my learning to publish my thinking that spirituality can provide a route away from fragmentation, and can operate as a guide to help individuals and organizations achieve positive outcomes.

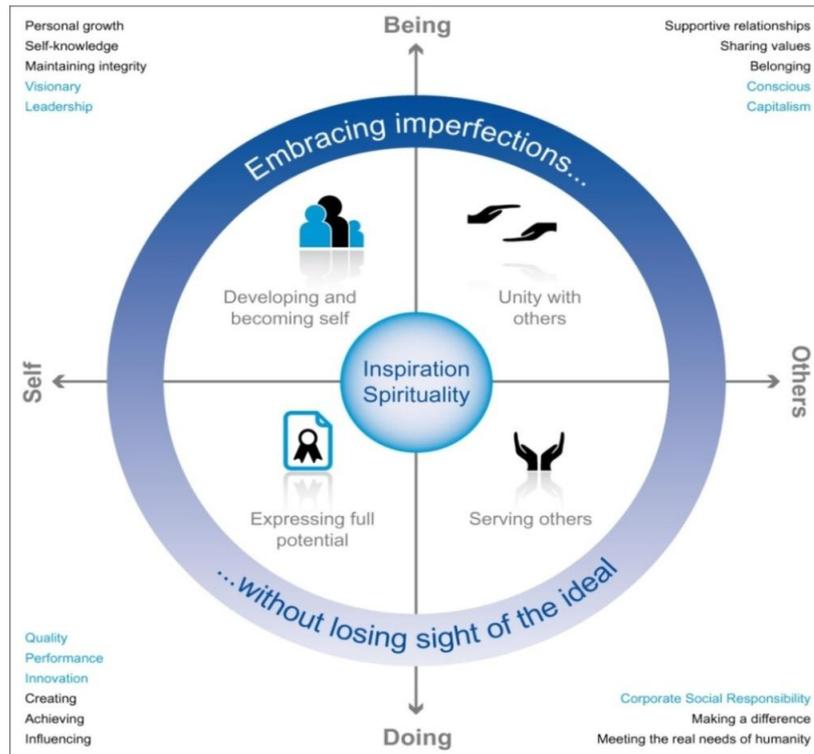
My research was of interest to people, who subsequently urged me to continue to advocate for more spirit-friendly workplaces - AH was one of these people. He had been a participant in my Master's research, and was an Associate Lecturer within the business school. We worked on a variety of projects together, including the development of an MBA elective around SAW<sup>10</sup>. An overview of the ideas and resources I encountered during this time was published in a co-authored book (Howard and Welbourn, 2004). I became involved in a variety of courses, UK and international conferences, events and workshops which addressed SAW, and provided a route for me to address spirituality with others. I joined the UK Spirit in Work network, led by my co-author, and became known as an advocate for giving attention to spiritual development within organizational life. I became more aware of the academic field of SAW, and wondered how I could work within it. At that time I met Professor Yochanan Altman, then Research Professor with the London Metropolitan University, at a conference.

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<sup>10</sup> We developed sessions on Spirit at Work themes for various audiences, including an elective called: 'Creating Organizations that people Want to be Part of' (COWP) which was offered to Cranfield MBA students. AH was also Chair of MODEM ([www.modem-uk.org](http://www.modem-uk.org)); at his invitation I became a member of MODEM's leadership committee.

Professor Altman was the founder and editor of the newly emerging JMSR, and he invited me to organise SAW themed workshops on behalf of the journal. Our collaboration lasted from 2005 to 2008, during which time leading academic contributors to the journal, including Martin Rutte and Dr. Judi Neal, presented workshops. Dr. Marjo Lips-Wiersma, Book Review Editor of the JMSR, and an early author of academic papers in the field (Lips-Wiersma, 2002a, 2002b and 2002c), facilitated the first workshop in London in June, 2006. The workshop, entitled *Personal Spiritual Foundations to Leadership*, attracted twelve participants including three people from two of the UK's influential management colleges: Ashridge and Roffey Park. Lips-Wiersma introduced the group to the Holistic Development Model (HDM), which stemmed from her own PhD research. The HDM formed the basis of our shared exploration into the territory of spiritual foundations to leadership. Two comments sum up what happened at the workshop. The first from a Senior Consultant at Roffey Park who, during the introductions, said (rather guardedly), 'I've come to give spirituality a good poke'. The second from the Ashridge representative who, during the final comments, concluded 'Spirituality Rocks!' Through her use of the HDM, Lips-Wiersma had created an environment where people felt safe enough to open up to the spiritual dimension - to bring their questions and challenges, but also to experience something of the power of the spiritual connection. There was a sense of genuine encounter, meaning, and passion which helped to unify and excite a room of participants.

Following the JMSR workshop with Lips Wiersma, we were both invited to continue to work with the HDM at Roffey Park and at Ashridge. In each context the spiritual element was closely tied to leadership challenges, and the relationship between spirituality and personal and organizational leadership presented an opportunity for further research and development. My encounter with the HDM helped me to value it as a platform for creating a rich learning environment, one that could take account of the spiritual dimension of humanity. Because of my close involvement with the HDM, and my desire to find a way to support spiritual learning, I founded the freelance consultancy Holistic Leadership in 2008, centering my consultancy work on the model (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5: The Holistic Development Model**

I used the HDM as a foundational tool to enable spiritual formation in two different types of leadership development arenas: group workshops and individual spiritual mentoring. Examples are provided below to show how this work has shaped my thinking and actions. This work has influenced the questions I am bringing to my thesis.

#### 2.5.1.1 Group Workshops

In 2010, with my then business partner (DW), I ran a workshop at the London Centre for Spirituality entitled *The Spiritual Dimension of Organizations: Spiritual Practices and Holistic Leadership*. We used the HDM to design the workshop, and to explore the dimensions of spirituality within work. Participants included consultants, academics and clergy (male and female from a variety of denominations). My learning from this event took into consideration responses to exercises (which were typed up and circulated to participants after the event), feedback sheets collected on the day, and my personal reflections.

Feedback showed that the HDM was seen as a valuable tool: ‘The model is very helpful’; ‘The model is a very good tool as a way into a discussion on spirituality’; ‘It was helpful to talk through the model’; ‘The model, in all its simplicity had enough to offer to apply it in all kinds

of organizational contexts. [But] it seems to be more a tool for personal awareness and coaching than for using it in the board room.’ Using the model in this workshop confirmed to me its applicability as a vehicle for leadership formation. I was encouraged by feedback from one person who said they would use the model by ‘inviting Sue [and DW] to conduct a workshop for leadership groups within the congregation’. The workshop gave me confidence about continuing to work with the model, and a sense of personal conviction regarding the validity of my own interpretations and explanations. As Whitehead and McNiff (2006) state:

developing confidence, without arrogance, about the validity of one’s own perspective takes some courage and determination and a sense of professional identity, but it needs to be done if you are to persuade others that they should take you and your claims seriously.

(Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.103)

This growing sense of personal validation also requires social validation, which means meeting with critical friends and validation groups; this is a further action research requirement which I have taken forward.

#### *2.5.1.2 Individual Spiritual Mentoring*

DW and I wanted to support the spiritual leadership journey of senior managers and executives. We designed an approach to individual leadership formation using the HDM which we branded as the Spirit (L)ed<sup>11</sup> Journey (SLJ), and called ourselves Spirit (L)ed Companions. We tested the SLJ approach with a client<sup>12</sup> between March 2009 and June 2010. Creating the SLJ signaled our view of the importance of personal spiritual growth for leaders. We offered ourselves as spiritual mentors, to walk alongside leaders, to help them to create time and space for reflection. We provided tools and resources, support as well as loving challenge. Our distinctive offering was to tailor, and personalize, resources in order to maximise the support available for leaders in their particular leadership context.

Our client did not think of himself as Christian but he had had a variety of spiritual experiences and insights that were recalled and encouraged in our SLJ process. Operating as spiritual mentors, DW and I worked out how to handle questions about God together as the journey unfolded. For me, this meant gently leading our client to be more open to his personal relationship with God; I was intentionally attempting to discern the spiritual direction of our

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<sup>11</sup> We added a bracket around the L, because we felt we were learners on the journey, learning to be led by the Spirit too, not experts; the (L) was reminiscent of the ‘L’ plates on the car of a learner driver. For me, it highlighted the notion of learning being a place of humility and vulnerability.

<sup>12</sup> I use the term client loosely as in the end he was not able to pay us. DW and I regarded our work as a business development cost. DW found the process useful as it informed his own academic studies.

sessions. But I noticed that I began to trust DW less about his spiritual guidance; I felt increasingly uncomfortable about where he was leading our client when he implied that all religious paths are similar. By calling ourselves spiritual mentors, I thought we had a responsibility to create a learning space that would promote genuine, which for me meant godly, spiritual connections. I began to see that working as a spiritual mentor with DW was more complex than I had envisaged. This situation led me to begin to question the purpose of my work, and moved towards a fuller investigation of the significance of my Christian perspective.

A case study of our individual client work appears in the book about the HDM (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011, p.98-105). Despite my reservations, our client was incredibly enthusiastic about what we were doing, and before we had reached the end of the process he was keen to give a testimonial:

The Spirit leadership course has so far been a fascinating journey for me. It has helped me start to remember things I had forgotten. It has helped me begin to realise that my own potential may just be what I had always hoped it would be. And since beginning the course I have met a surprising number of likeminded individuals in the business space. Undertaking this journey with DW and Sue has been the most progressive step I've taken in business for many years.

(Edwardes, J, personal communication [E-mail], 2009)

Whilst the SLJ approach proved to be successful from the client's point of view, my business partner and I agreed that we would not continue to work together. This was partly because we found it difficult to attract any new clients, but mainly because of my concerns about the integrity of our work. I felt that we had different interpretations of what it means to be spiritual, and I could not trust the spiritual guidance he might offer to any future clients. The key learning for me was that we were coming at spirituality from different perspectives. My Christian foundation, contrasted with his desire to work on an interfaith basis. This highlighted to me how the SAW space can be muddled when definitions of spirituality are not clear. My experience has shown me how the concept of operant theology (Cameron *et al*, 2010) plays out, and how complex it can be to apply theological understanding.

I take seriously the influence I might have as I investigate people's spiritual lives. Whilst the SLJ was not an attempt to convert the client, it did open up a way for him to revisit his relationship with God. It became clear to me that I need to know I am supporting people towards gaining a fuller experience of the Trinitarian God. If I am not clear about this, at least to myself, I do not feel I can operate with integrity. This early client work led me to explore my own Christian

spirituality further, and to trial the SLJ approach with a colleague in order to investigate what happens when I work from an explicitly Christian perspective. This trial is written up in Chapter 4.

My theological background, and now my work experience, are highlighting that spiritual truth is a vital driver for me. Being clear about what constitutes spiritual truth is essential for me when it comes to working with spirituality. In this, I recognise that my everyday choices are actually 'deeply moral' activities which 'involve critical reflection and discernment' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.87).

### *2.5.2 Phase 2: Shaping and forming EPICC as an organization consultancy, 2010-2013*

I am providing some contextual background information about EPICC<sup>13</sup> in line with guidance presented by Coghlan and Brannick (2010), drawing on Shani and Pasmore (1985, p.444), who offer a complete theory of the action research process in terms of four factors: contextual factors, quality of relationships, quality of action research processes, and outcomes of action research effort (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p.4). The EPICC context shaped my investigation, and provided an ideal opportunity for me to explore my research question in participation with others. Different Christian perspectives were evident within EPICC, and I could explore how these impacted our thoughts about leadership. In addition, working as part of EPICC provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my own Christian faith, and explore what it means within the field of SAW. I was also able to test out my ability to design a process which could enable people to learn about their spirituality. In my work with EPICC, using action research as practical theology, my purpose has been to explore the theological and practical ways in which our encounter with God is being 'experienced, nurtured and expressed' (Cottrell, 2011).

I became involved in EPICC after a year of developing the Holistic Leadership consultancy. I was contacted by AH who had become Chair of the Board of Workplace Ministry, a diocesan initiative to oversee chaplaincy provision to organizations in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. He wanted to move the capacity for Christian influence in the workplace beyond the offer of pastoral support, and to set up an organization consultancy that would be linked to the existing chaplaincy operations. He convened a meeting of consultants and researchers who

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<sup>13</sup> Name derived from a blend of EPI (Ecumenical Partnership Initiatives, the charitable company behind Workplace Ministry) and CC (Compassion in Change, which was agreed as a description of the consultancy offer)

might want to collaborate<sup>14</sup>. I saw the value of working with others to share ideas, and resources in order to gain momentum in the marketplace and so became involved.

The new consultancy group which emerged from these meetings was originally named EPICC, but later Workplace Ministry (chaplaincy) and EPICC (consultancy) were rebranded as Workplace Matters<sup>15</sup>. However, as the name change occurred early in 2013, and as my initial phases of action research took place before that time under the name of EPICC, I use the names EPICC and Workplace Matters interchangeably. I became a Principal Consultant, and later (in April 2014) Director of Consultancy. An early statement summarizing the combined intention of EPICC, and Workplace Ministry, was Christian Presence and Service in the Workplace; I have carried this vision through my work.

The rationale to develop EPICC as a consultancy operation stemmed from both the experience of Christian chaplains, who regularly encounter employees suffering from issues such as stress resulting from change in their work environments, as well as from AH's insistence that typical consultancy offerings do not address deeper-rooted issues. Chaplains had not felt equipped to deal with difficult issues caused by the workplace itself; and AH's view was that more was needed to help resolve some of the underlying tensions experienced in work. He wanted to support the creation of positive work environments, mainly by encouraging spiritual leadership within the work context. Spiritual leadership is defined by the International Institute of Spiritual Leadership (IISL) as:

Intrinsically motivating and inspiring workers through hope/faith in a vision of service to key stakeholders and a corporate culture based on the values of altruistic love to produce a highly motivated, committed and productive workforce. The purpose of spiritual leadership is to tap into the fundamental needs of both leaders and followers for spiritual well-being through calling [life has meaning and makes a difference] and membership [belonging]; to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels; and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of employee well-being, organizational commitment, financial performance, and social responsibility – the Triple Bottom Line<sup>16</sup>.  
(IISL, 2015, [online])

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<sup>14</sup> The first meeting I attended to explore this idea with all those involved was held in June 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Workplace Matters has three spheres of operations: Chaplaincy, Consultancy and Centre of Excellence. The Board decided to change the company name to Workplace Matters in September 2011. Initially, the consultancy arm retained EPI in its name of EPICC, but changed its name to Workplace Matters in January 2013.

<sup>16</sup> The Triple Bottom Line is an accounting framework with three parts: social, environmental (or ecological) and financial; also called the three Ps: people, planet and profit.

AH was<sup>17</sup> a proactive person with a long-standing involvement in the SAW field.<sup>18</sup> He believed SAW has the capacity to bring meaning and purpose to work, that it can help to provide a richer experience of work with better relationships, and could help to affirm and develop people as individuals. By working closely with AH, through EPICC, I have been able to test and refine my understanding about what this might mean in practice. My research shows this journey as it unfolds, including some of the conflicting ideas and beliefs. As a founder member of EPICC I was able to influence the shaping of the consultancy practice, and I am therefore using episodes of EPICC's development as part of my research inquiry.

From the outset I have been aware of the difficulties that Christians have when talking about SAW. After our second meeting, held on 22 September, 2010, I shared my reflections on the meeting, by email, to the ten people who attended:

I am pleased that we came up with a list of possible clients, but [...] would like to add that [...] our meetings with them should allow for the possibility of partnering – e.g. co-creating with them an approach to incorporate spiritual principles, and then agreeing a payment strategy further down the line [...] this is a newly emerging and complex field. It is not always immediately apparent how this will benefit the business. [It] is experimental and open to the possibility of learning together, and from our mistakes. I know we do have something of value to offer, but we cannot yet say with certainty what it is, so we need to form deep and sustainable relationships with our clients, and these beginning conversations are critical to setting the tone and depth of what is to come. I would still like to be clear in my own mind and as a group what it is that we are inviting clients into and the possible offering that we are making to them. There are a thousand and one consultants out there – from the clients' perspective what difference are we going to be making, and why should they take the risk with us? What is different about what we are doing? How are we incorporating the spiritual dimension?  
(Howard, S, personal communication [E-mail], 2010)

The email reveals my frustration with discussions about SAW which can be vague rather than outlining specific pathways. I sensed others disengaged; one person stopped attending meetings after this point. Despite the lack of clarity, I perceived the shared wrestling over these issues was useful to me personally.

I invited JK<sup>19</sup> to our third meeting, held on 14 December, 2010. The minutes capture continued discussions about issues such as our individual and collective motives for engaging in this work:

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<sup>17</sup> Sadly, AH passed away in January, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> AH was a Judge on the International Spirit at Work Awards panel <http://www.spiritatwork.org> and co-authored *The Spirit of Project Management* (Neal and Harpham, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> I met JK, then Senior Partner in a consultancy firm, at a Christian Human Resources event in 2008. We had been sharing ideas about these issues since then.

Subsequent discussion included comments about believing we have something to offer from a place of compassionate listening; application of spiritual values for people at work in a way that is tailored for each organization; a test is whether the driver for doing this is getting paid, or doing something that has value that will be recognised by payment, if not immediately. Whether this is a consultancy or something else such as research: subsequent discussions noted that traditional consultancy is not in vogue just now, and potential partners might be suspicious about possible financial motives; that if this is research it is not quantifiable and academic; it needs to be in partnership, rather than a traditional consultancy product we are selling; this is bridge building/we are seeking to operate from a new paradigm; not offering change consultancy in the traditional way. Some will “get it” straight away, some will not “get it” at all, some will “get it” immediately and then want to know what to do so, we need something to offer but in a way that empowers/supports and motivates work together; a document that explains our position would be useful.  
(EPICC, 2010, Item 4)

We agreed on an action at this meeting - that we would each write a position document, with an external client in mind, outlining our intentions around SAW work. The Chair planned to combine these into an article. This request for definition led to some further retraction from the group, noticeably my former business partner DW. His inability to articulate his approach affirmed to me that it was timely for me to enter into new working relationships. The people who actually sent the Chair a document became the core EPICC team.

During our fifth meeting, on 5 April, 2011, the then Director of EPICC shared some documents she had been drafting about the organization structure. The strategic aims of the consultancy were outlined as being to:

- Help people feel that their work is valued
- Remove the tension between material dependency and an inner spiritual desire, enabling people to step into a desired future
- Help organizations to transform themselves into places of holistic wellbeing, which organizations and individuals will recognise as making a significant contribution to their success
- Design, build and deliver strategic solutions for EPI clients
- Create a self-sustaining consultancy with a broad portfolio of clients capable of delivering an abundance – both in terms of thought and money
- Become an organization rich in prophecy and ‘profitcy’.

(EPICC, 2011, Item 5)

These aims are hard to measure, more like a set of noble intentions; they do not provide clarity about what we might achieve and how we could do it. Thus the meeting provided the impetus to arrange an Away Day (retreat) in order to think things through together, and I volunteered to organize and facilitate it.

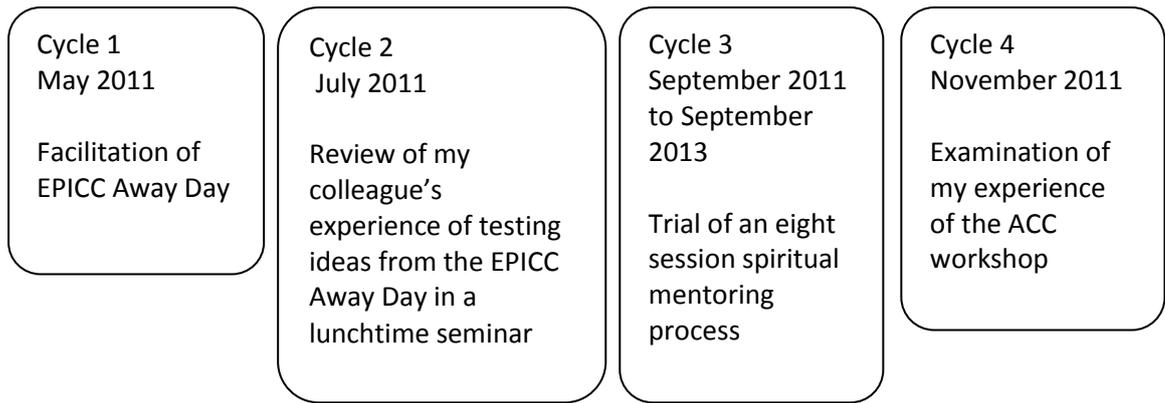
The purpose of the retreat was to:

Work through in more detail what EPICC is offering to clients and to create outputs in the form of proposals, journal articles and a paper that offers a “free” tool to share some knowledge about what approach we take. EPICC intends to use outputs from the day to promote EPICC through a variety of channels including the church press and other Christian and business outlets.  
(EPICC, 2011, Item 7)

The EPICC retreat therefore had multiple purposes. For the consultants, it was to be a collaborative and democratic engagement to arrive at specific outputs, and to address the problem of how we could generate momentum as a business. We were willing to invest time, energy and money into the retreat in order to make our action together effective whilst also building up a body of knowledge. For me, it was an opportunity to present some of my thinking, and to test out the HDM as a tool that can help make sense of the SAW area. As a group of colleagues coming together to explore a topic of mutual concern, it felt like quality group, containing people who were open to exploration. However, I had some reservations about AH whose ideas I have found increasingly hard to interpret in practice. I had a great fondness for AH; he has been a key figure in the political landscape of my immediate working context, and supportive of my work over many years. My dilemma with him was that he epitomized the wider SAW world, in that he was an enthusiast of generally sound principles, but the root of his thinking was hard to pin down. My work with him has enabled me to see the generalised sense of spirituality that I am now attempting to clarify.

EPICC’s practical intent was to partner with organizations to provide a variety of interventions. Through dialogue we, the EPICC consultancy team, agreed on three offerings to clients. Firstly, a capability for action research in order to explore with the client in their context how to change working life for the better. Secondly, the capacity to initiate and facilitate a variety of developmental, small and wide-scale projects in support of organizational and individual transformation. Thirdly, the opportunity to have a ‘mentor’ and to establish a relationship for the purpose of deep personal learning. My action research consists of a variety of EPICC related projects, including reviewing my action research inquiry into our internal development as EPICC, a review of my tailored mentoring approach, and work within client contexts on particular projects.

My research and work were closely intertwined so I capitalized on opportunities that emerged, and which I was also instrumental in bringing about. The two seemed to converge almost effortlessly. I conducted four main cycles of action research (Figure 6). As each cycle evolved, the sense of what else was needed became clearer:



**Figure 6: My four main cycles of action research**

Whilst these have been the four primary cycles for gathering data, I have also continued to undertake smaller cycles of action research by maintaining a stance of reflective engagement when I am involved in other projects. My learning has been continuous and ongoing.

My research question was informed by the notion of problematization (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011) which is 'a methodology for identifying and challenging the assumptions that underlie not only others' but also one's own theoretical position' (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, p.253). The idea is not to undo one's own position totally; rather, it is to unpack it sufficiently so that some of one's ordinary held assumptions can be scrutinized and reconsidered:

the aim [...] is to come up with novel research questions through a dialectical interrogation of one's own familiar position, other stances, and the domain of literature targeted for assumption challenging.  
(Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, p.253)

The need to unpack my own assumptions is a valid entry point for research; I have looked into my own familiar position, and explored ideas with others. However, it was not until I began a closer analysis of my data, and a more intensive exploration of relevant literature, that I began to fully investigate the assumptions I hold within my Christian perspective. My research question, which became: How does my interpretation of being Christian inform the work I do?, has been addressed using each of the research cycles; these have been useful as I have gained clarity about my position. I provide details about the research cycles below in order to explain my research method.

### 2.5.2.1 Research Cycle 1

Research cycle 1 situates my inquiry in my working context. My participation in a 24 hour Away Day with four of my EPICC colleagues provides a substantial foundation for my entire action research project. Our time together was a:

dialogic activity in which the stakeholders of the project [were able to] engage in *constructing* what the issues are [...] on the basis of which action will be planned and taken.

(Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p.9)

The retreat gave an opportunity to experiment with some aspects of the pastoral cycle, which Ballard and Pritchard (1996, p.85) describe as: experience, exploration, reflection, and action. We were able to share our experiences, and to explore and reflect on how we were forming as EPICC. We hoped that we would find common ground about what we believed, and what actions we should take next.

I was conscious about how I managed the process, as:

It is important that the constructing step be a collaborative venture [...] that you, as the action researcher, engage relevant others in the process of constructing and not be the expert who decides apart from others.

(Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p.9)

Prior to the formation of EPICC, individually and collectively, a lot of thinking had been done to reach the point where we, as a group of consultants, could come together to take SAW ideas forward. We had been committed individually to progressing our understanding of how to work with spirituality in organizational contexts. EPICC was an enterprise to rally around, and a vehicle for supporting each other as peers. It provided us, as Christian practitioners, with a forum to articulate our faith, and to explore what it means to incorporate our knowledge of God into workplace practice. The retreat provided an opportunity for participative action research and matched the criterion of genuine collaboration which Wadsworth (1998 [online]) outlines. The group consisted of five people: Board members AH and KW, consultants JK and SVB (who is also a Church of England priest), and me. Such a gathering has intention and potential as Senge *et al* (2005) highlight:

Hanauer<sup>20</sup> said “There’s no doubt about the value of being irretrievably committed to something. One of my favourite sayings, attributed to Margaret Mead [is] ‘Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.’ I totally believe it. You could do almost anything with just five people [...] you have a force to contend with. All of a sudden, you have enough momentum to make almost anything that’s immanent, or within reach, actually real. I

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<sup>20</sup> Founder of successful companies and Board member of Amazon.com, interviewed by Joseph Jaworski and Otto Scharmer (Senge et al, 2005, p.133-134)

think that's what entrepreneurship is all about – creating that compelling vision and force.”  
(Senge *et al*, 2005, p.134)

As lead facilitator, I organized our time around four inquiry sessions. Session one gave space for questions to surface, and to share what outcomes we wanted from the retreat. In session two we began to look at the HDM, and to explore how we might align our work. Session three continued the earlier discussion, but in a more pragmatic way, looking at what particular offerings EPICC might be generating for clients. Session four was the closing session, we summarised where we had got to, and what actions we could agree on. I taped all the sessions and later analysed transcripts of them. Flip charts from the retreat were typed up, circulated and also contributed as data for analysis.

I attempted to solicit feedback from my colleagues in August 2012. I invited them to comment on:

The way in which I facilitated the retreat, using the HDM, and how effective that was in *enabling spiritual formation amongst leaders*. This could incorporate the impact of the retreat on you personally and a reflection on how we made progress around our potential work with clients; To what extent is my (our) *Christian Interpretation* of the model important to you?; Through our joint interrogation how well do you feel we have made headway in creating an approach that is capable of “supporting leaders in organizations to address their personal leadership challenges”; Your reflections on me as a leadership development consultant working in this area (honest appraisal would be helpful to support ongoing critical reflection).  
(Howard, S, personal communication [E-mail], 2012)

Unfortunately, I did not receive full responses. One person said he realised what I had sent was important and he needed to follow it up, but he has not done so. Maintaining the drive and energy to focus on the importance of this work is difficult, particularly as it is not necessarily financially viable. Sustaining momentum for this work feels more like my calling, as I do not seem to be easily deterred, even when others drop away.

However, around the time of the retreat, there did seem to be a broader sense of general momentum. Dr. Lips-Wiersma, originator of the HDM, informed me that she would be travelling to Europe to promote *The Map of Meaning* (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011), the book she co-wrote to explain the HDM<sup>21</sup>. Lips-Wiersma offered to support, free of charge, any work that I was doing in the UK with the HDM. EPICC planned our official launch to coincide

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<sup>21</sup> Lips-Wiersma has continued to publish in this field, see for example: Lips-Wiersma, M and Mills, A, (2014); Algera, P and Lips-Wiersma, M (2012)

with her visit, and we invited Lips-Wiersma to facilitate a workshop with EPICC consultants as part of her trip. The EPICC launch, combined with a book launch, was held at St. Alban's Abbey in November, 2011. My contact with Lips-Wiersma coincided with the publication of the report by The Work Foundation on *Good Work* (Parker and Bevan, 2011 [online]), which included a focus on the importance of meaning within work. There is a growing awareness of meaning (Bains *et al*, 2007; Cranston and Keller, 2013 [online]) within leadership thinking, and EPICC seemed strategically placed to build on this platform. The timeliness of these factors added a sense of being on the right track. Analysis of what emerged from my first research cycle can be found in Chapter 3.

### 2.5.2.2 Research Cycle 2

Research cycle 2 provides an example of a positive action outcome resulting from my first action research cycle; it demonstrates quality of relationship with my colleague, and is situated in a new work context. JK came away from the EPICC retreat enthused and upbeat.

Consequently, he invited me to support him as he shaped a lunchtime seminar for his former consultancy firm (run in July, 2011). From this, I gleaned insights into JK's leadership journey, how he was translating the SAW ideas into his thinking, and his use of the Social Capital Model (SCM)<sup>22</sup>. After the event, JK and I reviewed how it went. We talked about his presentation, which did not draw on the HDM directly, although it had been shaped using the model prior to the event. He said 'I could see this being useful if we were applying the model to me as an individual, but at the same time were linking it to getting a richer picture of the way it links to the SCM, and a richer picture of the way we would use the combination so we would be doing a development of, if you like, the EPICC pitch. I do think it's important for me to spend a bit of time getting into (the HDM) more [...] And the only way to do it is to apply it to yourself.' He mentioned that he had recently been a participant and reviewer of a church course, which gave him the idea, and me the opportunity, to agree that I would guide him, as both a participant and reviewer, through the SLJ process. JK's positive regard for my work led him to

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<sup>22</sup> JK had been working with the Social Capital Model (SCM) via his connection with Transforming Business (see Appendix 8). JK was interested in exploring how the HDM blends with the SCM. Our conversations had a broader impact as during the SLJ sessions JK decided to take action by capturing his thinking in writing for publications. His first article on social capital became the cover feature for the *Credit Control* journal. His third article for the *Credit Control* journal explained the HDM (aka Map of Meaning) and he also wrote a book review of the *Map of Meaning* (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011). One of his articles appeared in the journal *Faith in Business Quarterly*. These articles were produced when JK was thinking through many leadership issues partly as a result of working with me.

be keen to invest time and energy into the SLJ. Learning from this research cycle can be found in Chapter 4.

### 2.5.2.3 Research Cycle 3

Research cycle 3 provides an in depth example of my action research process where I inquire directly into some of my core themes. I used the HDM to support spiritual formation, with myself in the role of a spiritual mentor, working from a Christian perspective. My work using the SLJ with JK commenced in September, 2011. We agreed that this process would be a helpful testing ground to evaluate the SLJ. We wanted to evaluate whether the process could be helpful for leadership development, and if yes, to consider how it might be offered to businesses, not just by me, but by other EPICC consultants. JK and I met together over a two year period for eight sessions using the HDM as a framework for reflection and discussion as follows:

1. *Who am I (Developing and Becoming Self)*
2. *What are my moral and spiritual values? (Inspiration)*
3. *Finding spiritual practices to nurture my workplace performance (Expressing Full Potential)*
4. *Developing my spiritual character (Embracing Imperfections)*
5. *Standing on the shoulder of my spiritual giant (What is my Ideal?)*
6. *All my relationships are spiritual (Unity)*
7. *What difference do I want to make with my life (Serving Others)*
8. *Reviewing and continuing my holistic spiritual journey*

Two years is a long time to accompany a person and much happens in that time frame. JK saw the sessions as effective, he said ‘the HDM is powerful; it was worth it’. He compared the HDM favourably against management development programmes he had been on, which use psychological tools, since he recognised that ‘the spiritual dimension is at the root of transformation’. JK was appreciative of my ability to take him ‘outside the normal run of the mill’ and described the sessions positively as we went through them. They were: ‘provocative, excellent and very useful’; ‘exciting and valuable’; ‘brilliant’. JK found our honest conversations both challenging and supportive, and concluded that using the HDM is a good way to help people make sense of themselves in the world. Insights from this shared process form my third research cycle, and learning from it can be found in Chapter 4.

#### 2.5.2.4 Research Cycle 4

This research cycle highlights some of the most challenging aspects of operating from within an evangelical Christian perspective in relation to work. Through my work with EPICC, I was approached by a business school to facilitate a masterclass for one of their clients, a Christian charity (ACC). JK and I took responsibility for the masterclass which was EPICC's first piece of client work. I wrote an anonymised case study about it (see Appendix 1), and this forms the basis of my fourth research cycle. The case study is summarized in italics below; I examine my significant learning from it in Chapter 5.

*The business school managed the relationship with the client ACC.*

*The client manager from the business school had designed a new leadership development pathway around 'good leadership' which was to feature 'masterclasses' as part of its offering.*

*The second masterclass had a theme set by ACC prompted by an internal survey which requested learning support on: 'the role of Christian faith within leadership'.*

*We accepted the invitation to run the second masterclass on the basis of it being offered to between 15 -20 (maximum) leaders and exploring Christian faith and leadership.*

*We were asked to provide 'a bit of theory' and something 'experiential and reflective'.*

*We designed an overview of our approach which was approved by our contact in the business school.*

*We were invited to meet the ACC CEO and key stakeholders – this was the only time we met the client manager, or had any direct contact with the client prior to the event.*

*At the meeting the goal posts for the masterclass shifted in a number of ways: The first masterclass offered (on 'Innovation') had not run due to lack of participant sign up. Therefore the second masterclass was now going to be the first pilot. It was decided that to be a pilot more people needed to attend and it was combined into a CEO meeting which would take place for 40 or more people; the people would not be able to elect to attend the masterclass - they had to be there. Therefore whilst the concept of a 'masterclass' was under trial the parameters had changed since voluntary sign up had been removed. ACC acknowledged there were differences between evangelicals and more moderate believers as to what a Christian leader is and changed the focus of the workshop to 'What makes a good leader in a Christian organization' rather than 'What makes a good Christian leader'. The CEO wanted people to 'feel challenged and slightly uncomfortable' as a result of the masterclass.*

*The overview of the workshop we had already prepared was approved as being suitable and since time was limited to change it, it was used in promotional material.*

*JK, DF (our contact at the business school) and myself agreed a more detailed design.*

*The project coincided with the launch of EPICC and the creator of the HDM was in the UK and visited EPICC to offer collegiate learning support as we developed our work with the HDM. As JK and I shared our planned workshop design Lips-Wiersma critiqued it and suggested changes.*

*This left me making last minute amendments to the design agreed with the business school. I felt somewhat undermined, under stress and under pressure. I was not as clear in my mind about whether what we intended to do was going to work and I attempted to incorporate some of Lips-Wiersma's suggestions. I lost the most valuable section of small group work around the model.*

*The event itself was difficult in a variety of ways. The room layout was awkward (two white screens) and the technical equipment was difficult to operate (remote control did not work continuously). The size and nature of the group was problematic as it contained a mix of those with faith, no faith and different interpretations of Christian belief. The requested theory input was judged to be too long and some people disengaged with it. Time was an issue there was too little time for much small group discussion or for much real work with the HDM.*

*I was exhausted by the end of the workshop and the feedback did not reflect well on me as a facilitator.*

Various tensions were present at the workshop including: the concept of running a masterclass, which ended up not being voluntary and was added onto an hour long meeting for too many people; the value of 'a bit of theory', in a room in which many people identified more with action; the work with the HDM, which actually did produce some good results despite other limitations within the teaching component; the ACC's ambiguity about the Christian emphasis of its organization, which was a long-standing issue that had not been resolved; and, my facilitation style, as working with large groups is not my strength. Post-event analysis and discussion gave a new perspective on the event, which ultimately was not perceived as negatively as the feedback sheets implied. The content was acknowledged as being good, but the audience and internal politics difficult. ACC admitted the subject matter was challenging, and recognized we dealt with it 'head on' (Appendix 1.9). The workshop demonstrated that Christian faith is not an easy subject to work with. However, the event did lead me to work on a one to one basis with ACC's Head of Christian Spiritual Development as his spiritual mentor. He appreciated my understanding of the complex issues in the territory. Chapter 5 presents some of the core insights emerging from the data gathered during this fourth cycle of action research.

### *2.5.3 Phase 3: Critical reflection on my research, 2012-2017*

My phase three research consists of taking a critical overview of what has emerged from this academic action research study. During phase three, which occurred during 2012-2017, I analysed my research, constructed my thesis, continued to refine my practice and reflected on the impact of my research on my work as a professional practitioner. Zuber Skerritt and Perry (2002) call this the thesis action research cycle. In a way, this phase has been a constant presence as it has required me to keep asking what I am learning. But in practice, this phase has been aligned with my ability to make sense of the whole project, something I was only able to do after phase one and two were completed.

Coghlan and Brannick summarise some thoughts about the value of action research:

Action research expects us to stop just going through the motions, doing what we've always done because we've done it, doing it the same way because we've always done it that way. Action researchers take a close look at what they are doing and act to make things better than they already are. Taking a closer look is action in and of itself, and that research, that knowledge creation, any action taken based on that research has the potential to transform the work that we do, the working conditions that we sweat under, and most importantly the people who we are.  
(Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p.16)

In phase three I consider what the 'closer look' means, what difference has been made to changing my work, our work (in the sense of Workplace Matters as a consultancy), and work contexts in general for the better. Chapters 3 to 5 share insights from my research and indicate what I have learned. In Chapter 6 I summarise my learning and draw some conclusions.

## **2.6 Analysing the data**

Swinton and Mowat (2006) say that 'Analysing the data begins at the initial point of collecting the data' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.57). My data is composed of the transcribed recordings of the EPICC Away Day, and conversations with JK. It also includes written responses resulting from use of the HDM, along with feedback, field notes, and other documents generated during the research. It includes the ACC case study. I have collected solid, descriptive data and have examined it as I have attempted to understand the meaning of the experiences which I have participated in and am studying.

The following steps (building on Husserl's concept of bracketing) have helped me engage in a serious inspection of the data:

Locate within the personal experience, or self-story, *key phrases and statements* that speak directly to the phenomenon in question  
Interpret the meanings of these phrases as an informed reader  
Obtain the participants' interpretation of these findings if possible  
Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied  
Offer a tentative statement or definition of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features identified in step four.  
(Adapted from Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.48, emphasis mine)

In my analysis, I have been aware of the interpretive and reflective work of the researcher, 'Theoretical Sensitivity' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.42) which refers to 'a personal quality of the researcher [...] an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.42). Theoretical sensitivity is an important dimension of the rigour of a piece of research, and hence reflexivity is perhaps 'the most crucial dimension of the qualitative research process' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.59).

I am aware that both non-theological and theological interpretations of data are possible. For example, when reviewing mysticism, Howells (2001) summarises, under the non-theological heading, the characteristics given by William James that can be used to define mystical experience which are: ineffability (incapable of being expressed in words); noetic quality<sup>23</sup> (other forms of consciousness than beliefs affect the physical world); transiency (temporary), and passivity (received through inactivity) (Howells, 2001, p.16). However, Howells then expounds on theological understandings of mysticism and argues that, ultimately, theological questions are unavoidable in the study of mystical experience; in fact they are a key to understanding such experiences. For me, this means that as I have investigated the spiritual qualities in my data, I have been looking for expressions of God at work, and have attempted to locate these expressions within a Christian conception of God. In interpreting the data I looked for how faith is evident in practice.

## **2.7 Criteria for judging my work**

My research contribution can be judged using a variety of criteria about its quality. Herr and Anderson (2005, p.55) lay out the goals of action research and validity criteria as Figure 7 shows:

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<sup>23</sup> James described noesis as the belief that this totally other form of consciousness actually offers knowledge of a higher truth value than that which can be obtained during normal conscious experience. Noetic experiences can be viewed as a flash of inspiration in which the recipient is left with the impression that they have encountered knowledge of a highly authoritative nature.

<u>Goals of Action Research</u>	<u>Quality/Validity Criteria</u>
The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity
The achievement of action oriented outcomes	Outcome validity
The education of both the researcher and the participants'	Catalytic validity
Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity
A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity

**Figure 7: Goals of Action Research and Validity Criteria, adapted from Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.55**

Using action research as a methodology has delivered results for me in line with Herr and Anderson's (2005) criteria; I expand on the application of their validity criteria below, encompassing additional quality criteria provided by the Ashridge Centre for Action Research (Piper, R, personal communication [E-mail], 2015):

*Knowledge:* Have I demonstrated why anyone should value my insights? Does my research have integrity? How does my subjectivity relate to the whole? Have I demonstrated a depth and range of knowledge in a complex area and am I working at the leading edge of my practice? My thesis charts my journey through the complex area of SAW, highlighting the difficult relationship between faith and spirituality. I provide an insider's view of the hidden complexity within the field of SAW.

*Outcomes:* Is my empirical research credible and skilful? Have I been autonomous and made professional use of others in support of self-directed learning? Have I obtained quality data and have I reframed the problem in a more complex way leading to a new set of questions or problems? Have I made an effective and critical selection of research methods and have I contributed to the development of practice based research? I have created new knowledge through original academic inquiry into specific situations, with particular people. I have been challenged as I have cultivated theological insights about my professional practice; I reframed my research question as a result of my experiences; other questions have also emerged.

*Catalytic:* Has my interpretive and hermeneutical frame revealed something hidden? Have I demonstrated critical reflection? Has my research re-oriented, focused and energised the participants towards knowing reality in order to transform it? Have I demonstrated an ability to formulate solutions in dialogue with others? I have located myself within the field of SAW, and immersed myself in my evangelical Christian perspective. I have developed positive working relationships with colleagues to explore Christian spirituality, and examined in detail how my understanding is applied within my professional practice. I have grown in ways I did not anticipate at the outset; my understanding of the grace of God and of faith has been enriched.

*Democratic:* Has my research been done in collaboration with others? Has my research been relevant and applicable to my context? Have I worked with critical communities through whom a new paradigm is being established and have I managed a sustained reflection of my own and other's practice so that self appraisal and reflective inquiry are intertwined? I have worked with others to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of knowledge, and to support spiritual development. I have applied my knowledge within specific, relevant, contexts.

*Process:* What is the significance of this research to convey knowledge? Are my findings the result of a series of reflective cycles in which I have re-examined underlying assumptions behind problem definition? Have I been able to analyse and synthesise complex and conflicting ideas and information in order to redefine knowledge and develop new approaches to practice? I have undertaken first, second and third person learning, through four cycles of action research to examine my own and other's assumptions. My faith, an area I thought was secure, has been revealed to me to be more complex than I had previously understood. By engaging in the messiness of the complexity, my journey towards understanding opens up a way for others to chart their journeys.

My work needs to be considered in terms of its broader significance. How is my research meaningful? Following my prolonged engagement with the issue of living Christian spirituality within work, my research illuminates some of the complexity contained within debates about SAW. My research has gone beyond generalities, as it has explored the experiential and personal. It offers an insider view of my *habitus* as an evangelical Christian, and reveals difficulties over how to interpret and apply FAW.

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter has explained my choice of action research as a methodology, and how it links to the field of practical theology. I have provided an overview of my three phases of action research which incorporate: historical action research, shaping and forming EPICC, and critical reflection on my research. My research method consisted of undertaking four cycles of action research during the phase of shaping and forming EPICC. These research cycles were: facilitation of EPICC's Away Day; a review of my colleague's experience of testing ideas from the EPICC Away Day in a lunchtime seminar; a trial of an eight session spiritual mentoring process; and examination of my experience of the ACC workshop. I explained my use of approaches to data analysis which include theological reflection, narrative inquiry and

autoethnography. I offered some criteria about the standards of judgment that may be helpful as my work is assessed.

In the next chapter I begin to review my phase two action research. I examine Research Cycle 1, EPICC's Away Day. Three topics are identified from the data, analysis of which led me to clarify the emerging themes of: My evangelical Christian perspective; the grace of God, and resistance and sin.

## **CHAPTER 3: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

### **3.1 Overview of Chapter 3**

The first research cycle demonstrates that Christians have different interpretations of the Christian faith. It also challenges some of the preconceptions in the field of SAW. I identify and locate my own Christian perspective because it is significant for my work. By exploring the topics of: transformation, whether spirituality needs to be explicitly Christian, and the impact of Christian spirituality on my work as a consultant, I have become clearer about my position as an evangelical Christian. The emerging themes of: my evangelical Christian perspective, the grace of God, and resistance as sin, are explored. I gained insights about operating on a one-to-one basis, the value of conversations, and the need to be a catalyst and change agent.

### **3.2 Making sense of the data – Research Cycle 1**

I reviewed, analysed and summarised the data transcripts in a variety of ways. Having initially found themes linked to my early research aims, I subsequently returned to the original data for deeper reflection on the conversations, and considered what insights are really of significance.

#### *3.2.1 Topic 1: Transformation*

EPICC had convened around a common Christian adherence, and a sense that the SAW ideas are important. Transformation was a topic we looked at which had both a personal and organizational application. In our first session, SVB commented that we were ‘giving back a different wisdom to the world’, that we were challenging conventional wisdom and ‘actually have a response to make to the world of wisdom which we currently have.’ The term conventional wisdom is often credited to the economist Galbraith (1999 [1958]) who used it when explaining the high degree of resistance in academic economics to new ideas. Higginson (2012) aligns himself with this sense of challenge when he suggests that Christian faith can bring hope by supporting alternative business models. He describes these as enterprises that fall somewhere between conventional business and the charitable sector since they have mixed motives, aiming both to be profitable and to do good. Examples include social enterprise, fair trade, micro-credit, cooperatives and eco-friendly companies. Mabey and Mayrhofer (2015) suggest that business schools are failing to address important issues. As editors they have drawn together a variety of writers who argue for greater understanding of different world views; consideration of different perspectives such as the arts, philosophy and spirituality; encouragement of the practice of responsible and ethical leadership; and for innovation and creativity to be nurtured.

As EPICC we felt we had something of this challenging perspective to offer, but at the same time, I acknowledged that we were 'struggling to put all these things together'. Our retreat provided us with a space to grapple with some of the complexity. This was important to EPICC since part of our aim was to provide a resource hub that could help to make SAW more accessible. We wanted to be able to arrive at a clear way to explain things, even though they are in fact not that simple. Through my retrospective examination of the transcripts, I have been attempting to elicit just what is the wisdom we felt we had. In the process I have examined aspects of my own faith, and considered just how faith presents a challenge to conventional wisdom.

Early on we identified some key words, 'emergent and enactive', which helped us to focus around the use of the 'present moment' as a vehicle for learning; meaning that any space which emerged for learning was one in which all manner of possibilities lay open, and which we could use to spark transformational insights. The topic of transformation became a focus for our attention. We considered different frameworks and approaches to working in a learning space with others. AH mentioned Barrett's (1998) work around seven levels of consciousness, and values. AH had gone through a Barrett training programme and I had previously written about Barrett's work (Howard and Welbourn, 2004, p.163-165).

Barrett (2016a and 2016b [online]) has developed a global consultancy to support exploration of personal, organizational, leadership and societal values based on the idea that every human evolves and grows in consciousness in seven well defined stages: survival, relationship, self-esteem, transformation, internal cohesion, making a difference and service. Barrett draws on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which depicts seven psychological stages of development, to suggest that there is an ongoing human evolution of consciousness. He also uses Ken Wilber's work, regarded by some as New Age<sup>24</sup>, to support his thinking. The New Age movement suggests that each of us has forgotten our divinity and that we can seek our higher consciousness through a smorgasbord of beliefs and practices which are universalist in nature (Curtis, 2008 [online]). The New Age movement believes that all paths lead to God; whilst Jesus is considered as a great teacher, he is not recognised as the Son of God and the way to the Father (Curtis, 2008 [online]).

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<sup>24</sup> Wouter J Hanegraaff, (1998), *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p.70: 'Ken Wilber [...] defends a transpersonal worldview which qualifies as 'New Age''.

Whilst Barrett recognises that transformation may be down to something spiritual, and admirably encourages people to maintain positive values which can contribute to the common good, he suggests that the motivation towards living by positive values is self-driven, 'In order to let go of your potentially limiting values, you must learn how to manage, master or eliminate your fear-based beliefs' (Barrett, 2016b, last paragraph [online]). In my book (Howard and Welbourn, 2004), I drew on Barrett's (1998) view to encourage people to see that values are underpinned by spiritual questions:

at the level of transformation consciousness, or self-actualization, belief systems are re-examined. This may be due to a number of challenges [...] introspection occurs and transformation begins when an individual takes responsibility for the way things are. There is a shift from reaction to choice. The spiritual questions (e.g. who am I? why am I here?) begin to emerge, along with an awareness of the importance of values to guide decisions.

(Howard and Welbourn, 2004, p.165)

I was curious, during the EPICC retreat, about what and how belief systems are 're-examined'. I wanted to understand what my EPICC colleagues thought about transformation. I asked, 'Just because you want transformation to happen, does it happen? Isn't spirituality part of true transformation?' SVB agreed, 'I agree with Sue there's a complexity in the dynamic [...] that taps into the personal'.

Barrett's explanation of transformation, and his emphasis on values, now seems to me to be problematic. Perrin (2007) indicates the limitations of a values-driven approach towards meaning, and shows that the journey towards spiritual growth is neglected by a focus on values:

Attention to the journey of growth and transformation, and not just the measurement of attitudes, values or practices, needs serious attention if different psychologies are going to make further contributions to reflection on the specifically spiritual dimension of life as understood by Christian spirituality.

(Perrin, 2007, p.231)

So whilst Barrett accepts the relevance of the spiritual dimension to transformation, his lack of precision means his approach has become difficult for me. Values may depict what we think of as being important, but because they can represent such a variety of different motivational concerns they can often be in conflict as much as being congruent. Schwartz (2012 [online]) defines ten broad values according to the motivation that underlies each of them: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. Schwartz recognises that values can be beliefs as well as goals, and ordered by importance relative to each other. Values operate as criteria for judgment regardless of context.

JK mentioned that he had ‘an element of cynicism’ about working with values since he wasn’t ‘sure you can actually transform people’s values’. He was also critical of AH’s view, ‘If you are trying to say we’re all in A and we’re all going to B, well we’re not. Project managers might like to think so but we’re not’. As AH taught project management this seemed a very passionate stance against his view of the world. There was disagreement between JK and AH over the role of values in transformational change. This led me to think that AH might have made some uncritical assumptions about the types of tools and approaches he wanted to advocate and use in order to increase spirituality within organizations. AH was happy to be aligned with people who are active in the SAW movement, but he did not appear to have questioned the foundations of their approach.

JK attempted to clarify the meaning of values by drawing upon faith, ‘It’s interesting to reflect that people of faith will have the values that come from their faith.’ He expressed his assumption that people with faith will ‘naturally be more coherent in the sense of values than your average organization’. One aspect of the Christian faith is that it does provide something which can help to unify values; this might help to identify the ‘wisdom’ that EPICC felt it had to offer. Sheldrake (2007) writes:

In Christian terms, spirituality refers to the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect particular understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation.  
(Sheldrake, 2007, p.2)

Sheldrake depicts faith as being central for human transformation, but highlights that our lifestyles reflect our *particular understanding of God*. Such analysis reveals that the complexity of spirituality is hidden in our particular understanding or interpretation of God and so it becomes clearer to me why it is vitally important to understand who God is. Our knowledge of who God is affects our human identity.

Perrin (2007, p.136) suggests that the development of one’s personal identity involves weaving together meaning in our life story. We can interpret events from the past to make a meaningful whole; the pulling together of the various parts of our life story gives meaning to the present, and helps to direct us as individuals towards a meaningful future. The way we see ourselves means we can try on different identities and over time, through self-identification of how we would like to be, we can grow into that person. Perrin goes on to show how:

In Christian spirituality the Spirit is constantly at work weaving life stories, and the life stories of faith communities, into the story of Jesus. [...] The invitation, therefore, is to shape and tell one's individual Christian story using the story of Jesus's own life. In this way the story of Jesus really becomes one's personal story. Christians find their self-identity in Jesus [...].  
(Perrin, 2007, p.137)

My own experience of transformation stems from becoming a Christian; subsequently I have grown in my realisation of my Christian identity. Consequently, it has become of increasing importance to me to discern whether people are moving in alignment with the spiritual reality of God, and how this is manifesting itself in terms of deep change in their life in terms of who they are becoming and what actions result.

As EPICC we gathered together as Christians but we did not seem to be aligned in our ideas about what our faith meant for us. Our conversation showed that we did not all see things from the same vantage point, and this was impacting how we might choose to live out our Christian faith through our consultancy practice. Our different frames of reference led me to feel troubled that we did not share an understanding of the significance of being Christians; I felt we needed to go beyond generalisations of terms such as 'transformation' and 'values' if we were to find clarity about our position. Our different interpretations of the Christian faith reveal something of the difficulty involved in working out the relationship between SAW and faith. There was an underlying passive conflict going on between JK and AH. JK commented that 'we belittle our God. I think there's an allowance in religion, in faith, to have people who claim they are Christians who haven't really taken on the true power [...] the values of the world (are) getting in the way.' AH responded, 'You have to have another debate about who is God? [...] It's about time we had a new set of definitions about what God is. Most of us grew up with God wearing a white beard, sitting on a cloud.'

AH's rather flippant comment reveals something of why theological truth is actually needed; humanity is generally confused about who God is. Leyden (2016) who writes about Barth's moral theology, helps to make accessible Barth's thought that only God can truly make God known to human beings (Leyden, 2016, p.14). Leyden also emphasises that what we confess about God shapes our lives (p.18). So this short vignette emphasises for me how important it is to seek out knowledge of God. My reflection and reading have helped me to see that my own questions about how to put my Christian faith into action is central to Christian ethics, which is described as the question 'what shall we do?' (Leyden, 2016, p.9). The answer can

only be found in conjunction with the questions 'who am I? what is my life about'. All these questions are totally connected to our understanding of who God is and what His will for us is. I noticed that my reaction to AH was negative, I did not find his quips helpful as I felt that he was trivialising God. He often interrupted the flow of a conversation with something which did not seem constructive; I felt that he had not wrestled with God and spirituality in any depth. My reaction indicates how I sometimes respond when things do not fit into my understanding of Christianity. I can become defensive; I recognise that, conceivably, I adopt a judgmental position. I was resistant to AH's apparently lightweight treatment of the significance of Christ because I felt he was missing the point. This conversation increased my awareness of my own underlying desire for people to know God more fully, since for me this is the route to love and understanding.

The example of difference between AH and I shows some seeds of conflict. It is interesting to note that conflict rather than being frustrating can offer possibilities for transformation (Cobbin, 2015). In conflict there is some messiness and brokenness which opens the way for God's grace and reconciliation. This is the very thing we, as EPICC, wanted to offer to clients, but did not seem to recognise that we ourselves were in need of it. Cobbin explains how 'conflict offers an opportunity for us to be part of the work of the gospel, the reconciliation of all things through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:17-19)' (Cobbin, 2015, p.4). It felt like we were talking about God, but not all approaching God with the same level of seriousness. Since my personal experiences have convicted<sup>25</sup> me that the only way we can genuinely access transformational change is to engage with God, I was trying to work out, through the retreat, how I could express and convey this meaningfully in the world. I had hoped the EPICC forum would be a way to access some new insights with other Christians, but our varied understandings of ourselves as Christian were not bringing immediate clarity.

I moved the conversation on by referring to my slide which featured a question posed by Grint (2010): Is the sacred less the elephant in the room and more the room itself – the space in which leadership works? (Grint, 2010, p.91). Grint suggests that leadership embodies three elements of the sacred in terms of exploring: the separation between leaders and followers, the sacrifice of leaders and followers, and the way leaders silence the anxiety and resistance of followers. However, I used Grint's question to explore how 'spirituality is the thing which enables people to unlock God's presence [in leadership]'. This was an important point from

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<sup>25</sup> I use the word convicted, rather than convinced, because in my view the Holy Spirit has been active in my experience.

my perspective, as I was suggesting that spiritual reality underpins all our meaning-making. Making this point illustrates my assumptions; I latch onto things which seem to support a Christian perspective and worldview. I said, 'God upholds creation. God has given us the complexity and these layers of things that we struggle to make meaning of.' The perspective that spiritual reality underpins everything does challenge current conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom is understood as commonplace beliefs about the way the world works and explanations of it which are generally accepted. But conventional wisdom is not necessarily right, as Sturt and Nordstrom (2015 [online]) point out:

conventional wisdom is often wrong, especially in the workplace. A lot of well-intentioned business and leadership advice circulates offices [...] while some of it is sound, much of it is not only off the mark, but has actually been disproven. (Sturt and Nordstrom , 2015, p.1 [online])

I perceive the Christian faith as being counter-cultural in that it challenges the way the world works; this is something Jesus demonstrated, for example, when he confronted the religious leaders of his day. Accessing spiritual truth does provide a key to a new way of looking at the world, but I am becoming more critical about the way in which I might communicate this. I hoped that working with EPICC would be a pathway to developing a robust engagement with organizations. But it was not immediately clear to us what we were all about.

Our conversation led me to see 'there are different questions about where we are Christian [...] I think the interpretation of being Christian varies in this room. We all have a different journey. I think all of these things can inform [EPICC] but this is what we need to debate. How does this inform the work we do with people? And how do we bring these different reference points to actually make it accessible to people, that's going to be productive and positive for their spiritual journey.' We agreed that we needed to ask *why* we were forming as EPICC and *what* we wanted to achieve through it. This was aligned with other questions such as who are we, what do we do and *how do we do it?* In a broad sense we had identified that we wanted to support transformational change, but we had not identified how the transformational change came about.

### *3.2.2 Emerging Theme 1 - My evangelical Christian perspective*

EPICC's first retreat session highlighted a need to identify the particulars of a Christian perspective, as general assumptions need clarifying before they can be translated into practice. I have realised that I need to locate my own Christian perspective within Christian theology and church history. During a research supervisory meeting, one of my supervisors, in

a somewhat exasperated tone, said ‘you evangelicals’! That simple statement caused me to ask myself, am I really an evangelical? Although I currently attend an evangelical church, when I became a Christian I attended a different church, it may be helpful at this point to share a little of my Christian journey.

I had a very real spiritual awakening in my twenties which I think of as ‘being called’. This call led me to seek out a church to attend, and for various reasons, I was drawn to a church that placed strong emphasis on the authority of the bible and the need for obedience to God, which included repentance from sin, baptism into new life with Christ and an ongoing journey of sustaining conversion. There was also emphasis on end time prophecy and the coming kingdom of God. I was baptised (full immersion) when I was 21, a turning point after which I knew I had become a Christian. In the following years I attended church services, Bible studies and a church Bible college in America, through which I learned more about what the Bible says. This understanding helped me to maintain my relationship with God. However, gradually, I began to feel that there must be more to the Christian life than I was experiencing. My sense of being led to a different walk with Christ was something the church leaders were also experiencing. A change in leadership<sup>26</sup> resulted in the doctrinal position of the church being reviewed, they moved towards a fuller understanding of grace, and more emphasis on Jesus. This experience began to show me that interpreting scripture is not a straightforward process. In my personal spiritual journey, lived within the limitations of human failings (my own, and that of others), I have sought to discern where the Spirit of God leading, as it is the Spirit who guides us into all the truth<sup>27</sup>.

The church I was in reoriented its stance and became recognised as evangelical by mainstream Christianity. Yet, although I had spent 25 years as a member of this church, and grew spiritually as a result of it, I felt the local congregation where I worshipped was not embracing the doctrinal changes in a way that made it possible for me to remain committed to attend services there. I sought a church which had a greater functionality of welcoming the Holy Spirit and living by grace. I do not want to embellish my story with substantial detail here, but it indicates that I have been on a journey to seek spiritual truth, and that my understanding of obedience and conversion have changed over time. I have moved from a motivation of obedience to God’s Ten Commandments, towards growing awareness of my need to be in a

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<sup>26</sup> The original leader died, a new leader came who also later died, which led to a third person taking up the main leadership role

<sup>27</sup> John 16.13 ‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth’

personal relationship with Jesus and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I have seen at close hand the way in which leadership hierarchies can get things muddled, but also how people can repent and change. Realising that the Christian life is one of ongoing change is significant for me and my thesis. Change can be both liberating and confusing; it can lead to depth of understanding and practice.

The church has developed since its inception as it has settled in different lands, cultures and traditions of society. Christian spirituality has been seen from many perspectives and lived in many different ways. I am not able to provide a comprehensive historical overview of the different influences on, and divisions within, the church over time (see Wakefield, 2001, for help with this), but the writing of my thesis has led me to question why there is so much difference within Christianity, and to investigate what *evangelicalism* means. It has taken me over 30 years to identify myself as an evangelical Christian; I need to understand more about this perspective as it impacts my identity, and my *habitus*.

Evangelicalism, a term used for a wide range of Protestant Churches and groups, is not to be confused with evangelism which is about preaching the gospel with the intention of converting others to the Christian faith. In simple terms, evangelicalism emerged from the Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli and other Protestant reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The main thrust began on 31 October 1517, when Luther declared, to the Bishops, his objections about, what he perceived as, the corrupt teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. News of the 'protest' spread quickly, and many agreed with Luther which led to the beginning of the Lutheran movement. The Reformation sought to re-orient Christianity to what the reformers considered was the original message of Jesus and the early church. Luther recognised the Bible as the highest authority *sola scriptura*; that we are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ *sola fide*; and this faith is by the grace of God *sola gratia*. Luther recognised Jesus Christ alone is Lord, Saviour and King, *solus Christus*; and that we are to live for the glory of God *solus Deo Gloria*. These theological convictions are central to the life of evangelical Christians. The term protestant was not originally used by Reformation era leaders; instead, they called themselves 'evangelical', emphasising the 'return to the true gospel (Greek: *euangelion*)' (MacCulloch, 2004, p.xx).

In Christianity, the gospel (from the old English: *gōdspel*), or the Good News, is the news of the coming of the kingdom of God as Mark 1.14-15 proclaims, 'Now after John was arrested, Jesus

came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." The gospel includes the life and death of Christ as the Apostle Paul wrote:

the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
(Romans 1.3-4)

The death of Jesus provided atonement for sin, which made possible reconciliation between God and humankind, as I Corinthians 15.3 states, 'Christ died for our sins'. The resurrection of Jesus signals 'the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith' (Romans 1.16). The truth found through the life and death of Jesus Christ is that God wants to be in relationship with humanity, and he has made a way for us to know him. Coming to know Jesus is a life-changing experience.

The movement for reform coincided with the rapid dissemination of biblical materials across Europe from 1517 onwards. Individual members of the laity were able to grow in biblical literacy and personal piety. With the wider accessibility of biblical texts people became interested in how to interpret scripture, and how to live out their faith, and this meant there was interest in public preaching. The Protestant Reformation gave rise to four major divisions or traditions of Protestantism in support of spiritual growth. These include Lutheran (after the teachings of Martin Luther), Reformed (Calvinism/Presbyterian), Anabaptist (Baptist), and Anglican (Episcopal/Methodism). From these multiple forms of church denominations have emerged and each has a slightly different doctrinal emphasis from the others. Adam (1988) highlights two particular strands of emphasis: Puritanism (from Calvin) and Pietism (from Luther). Puritanism stems from the puritan movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries which sought to purify the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church from within. Puritans adopted a reformed theology, and advocated for greater purity of worship and doctrine as well as personal and group piety. The focus of puritanism was on seeking corporate conformity to the teaching of the Bible through church and civil government, although this included the idea of personal biblical interpretation through the Holy Spirit. The focus of pietism was belief in the power of a direct, individual approach to God, which placed a high priority on personal spiritual experience, and emphasised a change of heart, the life of prayer and holiness of life. Pietists were inclined towards separation from the world.

Over time these two variations in emphasis have both been taken forward into evangelicalism. Differences appear within statements of faith and belief; but differences of opinion over the interpretation of scripture, do not negate the centrality of Jesus Christ. The different denominational stances on doctrine, church government, worship, and church practice can be confusing; and an evangelical church can mean different things to different people. However, it is broadly used in reference to Protestant Churches that affirm biblical inspiration and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. I recognise the church, as the body of Christ, is scripturally considered to be one body, as the Apostle Paul emphasized 'so we, who are many, are one body in Christ' (Romans 12.5).

The Evangelical Alliance provides an overarching basis of faith that evangelical churches are typically aligned with. They say:

We believe in...

1. The one true God who lives eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.
3. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God—fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.
4. The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgment.
5. The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin.
6. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.
7. The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.
8. The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.
9. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness.
10. The church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers—given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.
11. The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgment, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.

(Evangelical Alliance, 2017a [online])

I believe in this basis of faith, but am less clear about the various ways in which it differs amongst Christians, even though I recognise that there are different forms of church. The Evangelical Alliance website expands their interpretation of faith by offering some guidance. They describe a 'relationship commitment' (Evangelical Alliance, 2017b [online]), which is

about how evangelicals, through ‘affirmations’, and ‘actions’, should build relationships with other Christians. Space prohibits me from citing this in full, but some key points under ‘affirmations’ include: a sense of welcome and encouragement to all who serve Christ as Lord, and respect for:

the diversity of culture, experience and doctrinal understanding that God grants to His people, [acknowledging that] some differences over issues not essential to salvation may well remain until the end of time.  
(Evangelical Alliance, 2017b, affirmations, point 3 [online])

And some key points under ‘actions’ include: urging all Christians to pray that we may be one, promote relationships of love and peace, and contend for biblical truth. In addition, to deal directly, and with humility, over issues ‘of faith and practice that divide us’ (Evangelical Alliance, 2017b, actions, point 6 [online]). There may be much I have to learn about the varieties of Christian expressions of faith, and conceivably that is an ongoing sphere of learning which may be pursued as a result of completing my thesis. However, the focus of my attention and energy within this project has been taken up with pursuing *my call*, which guides me to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, who, as Hebrews 12.2 points out, is ‘the pioneer and perfecter of our faith’. I am examining, and interpreting, my understanding of God’s call on my life at this time, and from that position exploring how my journey might be of value to others in relation to work.

Whilst understanding what is distinctive within evangelicalism has not been the focus of my action research cycles, I now recognise that even identifying myself as an evangelical is not a conclusive stance. Wright (2013, p.1, [online]) says that there is no one answer to the question of what is evangelical Christianity; although it can be spoken about in terms of some of the characteristics associated with it. A description of Evangelicalism offered by the Evangelical Alliance (drawing on Bebbington (1989) and McGrath (1995)) summarises key evangelical characteristics as:

*Biblicism*: Through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the God who is objectively there has revealed universal and eternal truth to humankind in such a way that all can grasp it.

*Christocentrism*: God’s eternal Word became human in the historical man Jesus of Nazareth, who definitively reveals God to humanity.

*Crucicentrism*: The good news of God’s revelation in Christ is seen supremely in the cross, where atonement was made for people of every race, tribe and tongue.

*Conversionism*: The truth of the eternal gospel must be appropriated in personal faith, which comes through repentance — that is, a discernible reorientation of the sinner’s mind and heart towards God.

*Activism*: Gospel truth must be demonstrated in evangelism and social service.  
(Hilborn, 2015, p.2 [online])

The pivotal understanding of conversion is in this list. Stott (2006) describes Christian conversion as:

total renewal [...] Our fallen mind followed the way of the world; our renewed mind is engrossed with the will of God, as revealed in the word of God. Between the two lies repentance, *metanoia*, a complete change of mind or outlook.  
(Stott, 2006, p.60)

The evangelical emphasis on conversion, linked with the term *metanoia*, is a critical frame of reference for me. The final point of activism, in Hilborn's (2015 [online]) list, is an area that I am wrestling with in this thesis, as I ask the question: just how do we live out the Christian faith in the social arena of work?

Hilborn's (2015 [online]) list has helped me as I reflect on my personal experience and my journey towards being identified as an evangelical. I first became a believer in Christ, and received his atoning sacrifice on the cross for my sins, through a particular church. Yet over time the Holy Spirit has helped me to move towards a more intimate relationship with Jesus. I had experienced an inner restlessness which caused me to search for 'more' (Ponsonby, 2004) of God; I have found a greater sense of God's grace in my life, and feel more accepted, and loved. It is this deeper awareness of God which has helped me to understand the transformational work of the Holy Spirit in ways that I had not previously encountered. And it is this transformational experience which has motivated me to want to share more of the truth of who God really is with others. As I mentioned, the transition in my spiritual life led me to seek for a new church environment and sometime around 2008/9 I began to attend a church within The Vineyard Movement. The Vineyard is part of the evangelical Protestant tradition, but also categorised as neo-charismatic, which means that emphasis is given to the work of the Holy Spirit. In my former church, the work of the Holy Spirit had not been emphasised. The Vineyard Statement of Faith also emphasises Christ as King and understands that the kingdom of God is the 'central theological motif' (Vineyard, 2015, p.3 [online]) in understanding the story of God. These two significant aspects, life in the Spirit and the sense of the kingdom of God unfolding now, are key reference points within my current Christian perspective.

At the same time as the major transition in my church life I had begun to explore the area of Christian spirituality, and to see how different church traditions approach it; I began to explore the *habitus* of other traditions. Consequently, I have become more open to seeing the work of God's Spirit in the broader church, and in people's lives, and have become less constrained by being locked into a particular set of doctrinal teachings. Cockerton (1994) acknowledges that,

‘Evangelicals are looking outside their own tradition for guidance in the spiritual life’ (Cockerton, 1994, p.21). Cockerton’s overview of evangelical spirituality provides a similar orientation to Hilborn’s (2015 [online]) list. Starting with the proviso that evangelicalism consists of complex beliefs and practices, and that ‘much of what Evangelicals believe and do is also believed and done by people of other Christian traditions’ (Cockerton, 1994, p.4), he continues by suggesting that it is the overall structure and style of putting together devotion, discipline, liturgy and life that makes evangelical spirituality distinctive. He then outlines the core components as being Bible-based spirituality, the cross and Christian realism, acceptance with God, and being sure (the doctrine of assurance). I now explain these areas.

The most pronounced feature is the central place of the Bible in the devotional life of evangelicals, and their insistence on the Bible as the word of God. Evangelicalism has laid stress on the Bible as vital for spiritual growth. Cockerton (1994, p.5) warns against this becoming overly individualistic, although this contrasts with Bonhoeffer’s (1995 [1937]) suggestion that ‘through the call of Jesus men become individuals [...] as each [person] is called separately and must follow alone’ (Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.94).

The focus on the cross recognises that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of redemption and reconciliation with God. In explaining the vital centrality of the cross, Cockerton (1994) argues that:

Christian realism demands that [all Christians] should work from a spirituality which sees the Cross as the place *par excellence* where God shows his involvement in the world’s sorrows.  
(Cockerton, 1994, p.7)

The cross depicts the place where, ‘God appeared to be totally absent but was actually never more truly present’ (Cockerton, 1994, p.7); the cross contains both the suffering and rejection of Christ, as well as victory over sin and the promise of new life.

Acceptance by God is foundational to evangelical spirituality as:

what it means [...] is that God through Christ has done all that needs to be done to enable [all] to come to him and to be fully and freely accepted by him, so that their relationship with him rests, not upon what *they* might achieve but on what he has already achieved.  
(Cockerton, 1994, p.7)

Also known as justification by grace through faith, it is vital to understand that Jesus accomplished victory over sin, and all anyone needs to do is simply receive this in faith:

When this biblical truth is grasped and allowed to influence one's thinking and one's whole life before God there comes a sense of release and freedom which colours all of one's prayers and all of one's life as a Christian in the world.

(Cockerton, 1994, p.7)

Cockerton points out that:

acceptance by God through Christ is the most powerful incentive to good living that one could possibly have[and] the Christian's calling is to realize in practice, in daily living, by God's grace, all that is implied in being a member of God's family.

(Cockerton, 1994, p.8)

He states that it is this central knowledge of divine acceptance which:

makes for a spirituality that is joyful and free. The evangelical tradition has always tried to promote this kind spirituality with [...] varying degrees of success.

(Cockerton, 1994, p.8)

Although he acknowledges:

this is not a doctrine peculiar to Evangelicals though historically it has been a characteristic mark of their theology [and] vital for the spiritual health of the whole church.

(Cockerton, 1994, p.9)

The sense of being sure in the faith carries the weight of 'inner conviction of the truth of the gospel [and] an assurance of one's own salvation' (Cockerton, 1994, p.9). The initial moment of faith is continued by the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. And yet there is a struggle in the life of faith to overcome fears and cares and the struggle is a 'constant experience of the Christian' (Cockerton, 1994, p.9). Cockerton elaborates how the understanding of assurance can degenerate into a cultivation of feelings, and suggests that such degeneration can be avoided by faith that 'looks away from itself to its object. Assurance lives only in the bosom of faith and faith lives only as it directs itself towards God' (Cockerton, 1994, p.10).

I connect easily to such writing on evangelical spirituality. My transformational experiences have given me an understanding of spiritual truth as being compelling and essential. Features of evangelical spirituality such as: a direct approach to God as a child to the Father, concern for the maintenance of such a relationship, and confidence in turning assurance to active participation in the life of the world through social action, are features of my own life. I also identify with the notion of struggle in the life of faith, as this too is reflected in my own experience. Through such defining texts as that of Cockerton (1994), I am beginning to have a better awareness and understanding of myself as an evangelical Christian. However, I still need to become clearer about the impact of my Christian perspective on the work that I do.

My understanding of myself as an evangelical Christian provides me with a secure root, but how can I take this forward as I continue to engage in inquiry with others? The question for me (and us) remains around how best to share the reality of the spiritual life with others?

Keller (2016 [online]) writes that the good news of the gospel means that a true faith will always lead to good deeds; will involve us in caring for the poor and participating actively in our culture (p.30). However, he clarifies that what the gospel is should not be confused with what the gospel does, 'The gospel creates a life of love, but the life of love is not the gospel itself' (Keller, 2016, p.32, [online]). The gospel involves the announcement that we have been rescued from a broken relationship with God; Jesus has done what we could not by ourselves do in order to restore us to right relationship with God. Recognition of this is what results in a whole new way of life, but it is 'not a simple thing' (Keller, 2016, p. 47 [online]). I still need to resolve the challenge which Bonhoeffer (1995 [1937]) speaks of as 'the most urgent problem besetting [the] church: How can we live the Christian life in the modern world?' (Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.55).

### *3.2.3 Topic 2: Does spirituality need to be explicitly Christian?*

During the second session of the EPICC retreat, we agreed that spirituality is important, but it raises questions. SVB stated that for some people it becomes a very personal pre-occupation, 'it's all about "my spirituality"; it's all about tapping into "my potential". And it becomes incredibly sterile in the end.' We considered that the HDM expands understanding of spirituality as it balances self with others; it recognises that we are in community and people shape us. SVB introduced the concept of shalom as being significant describing it as, 'May it be to you as God intended it to be - abundance, wholeness and completeness.' SVB considered that true community was part of the abundance, in that flourishing and wealth were not just about money but included relationships. We talked about aspects of spirituality, such as service, well-being, and giving. We recognised that many paradoxes existed at the level of motivation, for example why do some people do good? People can experience good without explicit reference to or acknowledgement of God. And so we wondered whether spirituality does need to be thought of as being about connection with God, or to be Christian, in order to exist and operate?

As we explored this question, we talked about the work of Senge *et al* (2005). The authors wrote about their experiences of deep listening, being open, surrendering, letting go of the

need to control, and letting the future come. They had some profound experiences, which enabled them to realise new actions. The area of surrender felt important to me. I commented that, 'I think this is it, this is the space of sacredness which true leadership is about. It takes you to this place of letting go, allowing things to emerge and this emergence is the future, and what the future will be is the spiritual kingdom. That's the true future [...]' When I started reading that *Presence* book and reading about the emergent future through leaders that's when I really got excited. Because I thought if we can take people to a place where they are open to having these experiences with God, and seeing into the future that God wants to have happen through them, that is transformative.' On reflection I see that, once again, I have overlaid my Christian interpretation onto the experience conveyed by Senge *et al.* AH challenged me by saying, 'You have to get into defining God.' In retrospect, I think AH was right about our need for further definition around our concepts of God.

We seemed to be experiencing the tension between our unexpressed certainty that God is the source of genuine spiritual experience, and our unexpressed uncertainty about who amongst ourselves shared the evangelical desire to be explicit that God is the source of blessing. Was EPICC's underlying rationale stemming from a desire to stir up the Spirit of God in terms of positive qualities that stem from the Holy Spirit, but without naming it as that? On reflection I see our efforts related to how we understood our own Christian identity. We were confusing spirituality in a general sense with what Christian spirituality meant to us personally. If we were claiming to start from an awareness of Christian spirituality, we were bound to have a different sense of what that spirituality is about from those who are not Christian. Cockerton (1994, p.3) makes clear that Christian spirituality, from whatever tradition it comes, is based on the believer's personal relationship with God. So our personal relationship with God was part of what we were bringing into EPICC. By entering into the SAW territory we needed to bring our whole selves into the room, something which the field of SAW advocates (Robbins, 2015 [online]), but which paradoxically we experienced as challenging. Our own faith needed to be examined if we were to be clear about what we wanted to offer to clients.

EPICC, as an organization, needed to work out its identity and how we could apply an informed spirituality within situations. We needed to work out what the purpose of our work was. At the retreat I raised the questions: 'Are we as EPICC genuinely allowing Christ consciousness into organizations? Is that what we are doing? How far towards that end are we going? Is what we are doing really Holy Spirit led? Are we alert to God's presence and what God is

doing? These are genuine questions.’ JK said, ‘The longer we talk about things, the more the idea of being much more explicitly Christian, rather than secularising language in some circumstances and not secularising elsewhere, is beginning to appeal to me. I’m sort of getting the view that if you start turning to secular language you start losing the distinctive value.’ There was genuine difficulty within our group about whether it was necessary to declare the Christian faith openly in our business.

KW was concerned about how we could speak to clients about all this, and suggested that ‘you don’t have to because you do what you think is right without words’, and followed this with ‘we are people giving things in a different way.’ This approach by KW is aligned with the view, mistakenly ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi of, ‘Preach the gospel. Use words if necessary’. Stetzer (2012 [online]) refutes this idea:

I think we can appreciate what many are getting at when they say something like this. As Christians, we should live in such a way that our lives point to the person and work of Jesus. However, good intentions cannot overcome two basic problems with this quote and its supposed origin. One, Francis never said it, and two, the quote is not biblical.

(Stetzer, 2012, paragraph 2 [online])

Stetzer argues that proclamation is a part of the gospel, which he defines as the saving work of Jesus, and this is something that has to be announced.

I think KW’s dilemma was about the political sensitivity involved in being overtly Christian in client contexts, and the likely difficulty of earning an income if we were so explicit. SVB agreed with KW when she expressed the thought that, ‘Just by being there you are going to change it.’ Later JK said that we, as Christians, were grit, through our attention to serving others, that Christians were good at serving others. AH commented that service was what Jesus calls us to. And yet the value of service was seen to be one that was also worked out through individuals in other faiths as well. AH and KW had specific viewpoints on how we represented the Christian faith. AH did not want the consultancy to be ‘over explicit about being one faith’, and KW spoke from his experience of running an explicitly Christian organization and said ‘we are just about to change it’ because it had not been successful. I think they both felt that there was no need to agree on every point of theology to work together for common goals, and that doing so was unproductive.

By beginning to address what it means to live in a Christ-oriented way, we were exploring theological concepts that we struggled with. AH added ‘there is another question [...] which is

“what does God in me mean?”. If you believe we are in God’s image. If you believe that God is in each and every person, which I do, I didn’t but that’s what I now believe. Then you are looking at the interconnectedness of human beings’. We were demonstrating how our theological views impacted our outlooks. AH saw Christianity as a ‘bigger kind of faith, more connected and collective.’ SVB said ‘we can only make the true image of God when we are all together [...] I think we’ve underestimated what Christianity is actually all about.’ AH gave the view that at mid-life he realised life was ‘much more complicated’ and that ‘as you get older you realise you don’t know everything’. Part of the challenge of spirituality is that it is such a comprehensive concept, and therefore attempts to simplify it in order to work with it can be too reductionist.

### 3.2.4 Emerging Theme 2 - The grace of God

AH’s view in the above shows how understanding and interpreting faith can change. At the time of our retreat I was not sure I agreed with AH on his point about God being in each person. Subsequently, through the theologically reflective process of writing my thesis, and having been informed by Keller and Alsdorf (2012) who expound on the concepts of common grace and general revelation in relation to work, I have become clearer about God’s love for all people. But while I understand that humans are made in the image of God, I am not sure God is in a person unless they have received the Holy Spirit. Keller and Alsdorf mentioned general revelation to make the point that God reveals knowledge about himself to all through natural means such as observation of nature and the physical universe, as well as through human conscience and providence. They use the concept of common grace to point out that God has blessed all people, and that Christians can ‘benefit from, and cooperate with, non-Christians’ (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.188). Common grace:

refers to the grace of God that is common to all humankind. It is “common” because its benefits are experienced by the whole human race without distinction between one person and another, believers or unbelievers. It is “grace” because it is undeserved and sovereignly bestowed by God. In this sense, it is distinguished from the Calvinistic understanding of “special” or “saving” grace, which extends only to those whom God has chosen to redeem.

(Theopedia, 2016 [online])

In considering common grace I have investigated the work of Karl Barth who, through his major work *Church Dogmatics*, demonstrated that he had a more expansive view of grace than traditional Calvinists. Barth (2009a [online]) stated that there is only ‘one complete grace’ (Barth, 2009a, CD, IV, 1, 79 [online]), and that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has redeemed *all of humanity*. Barth firmly rejected Calvin’s theology of double predestination which said

that God chose some humans for salvation (the elect) through Christ and others for damnation (the reprobate). Barth argues that God's saving act in Jesus Christ is God's gracious decision to be for all of humanity in the person of Jesus Christ (Barth, 2009b, CD, II, 2, 195 [online]).

Discovering the contribution of Barth's theology on the doctrine of election has jolted my thinking. I had not previously believed that all are saved in Christ, but rather that it was necessary for an individual to repent, be baptised and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to be saved as the Bible implies:

Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
(Acts 2.38)

Barth's argument has shifted my understanding of God's nature and opened my mind to recognise that the grace of God is perhaps so much bigger than I had perceived it to be. But what, then, is the role of conversion? My understanding has been that conversion is an essential component of the Christian life, and from Hilborn's (2015 [online]) account, that is part of what identifies me as evangelical.

So having only just become acquainted with Barth, I am struggling again. Gillet (1993) crystallises that there are two types of evangelical spirituality:

those who put most emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the work of the Spirit in individual believers, opening their hearts and minds to respond to the call of God to repentance and faith. Others place greater emphasis on the individual's decision and response.  
(Gillet, 1993, p.28)

There is a difference of understanding over where the spiritual life really begins, is it in the prior working of God's Spirit (new beginning as response), or in the mind and heart of an individual (conversion and commitment to radical newness of life)? Thus the evangelical position of conversion is not without its own problems. My experience has been closer to that of commitment to individual conversion, and I realise I am biased towards this as the right way. I know it is not an easy path. Bonhoeffer (1995 [1937]) definitively emphasised the costly nature of grace 'costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again [...] it calls us to follow Jesus Christ' (Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.45), which also means we are to share in the suffering and rejection of Christ, as Christ bids us to 'come and die' (Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.89). That is to let go of our old way of life and follow Christ, wherever he may lead.

Bonhoeffer presents the view that an individual needs to take a step of faith and respond to God through obedience to the call of Jesus. For Bonhoeffer such responsiveness lies at the heart of discipleship. His insight is that we don't all have the same call, it is the will of Christ that determines our particular path (1995 [1937], p.100). Bonhoeffer rejects 'cheap grace' as a secularised form of Christianity that emphasises 'forgiveness without requiring repentance' (Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.44). Bonhoeffer writes:

the first step of obedience proves to be an act of faith in the word of Christ [...] If you believe, take the first step, it leads to Jesus Christ. If you don't believe take the first step all the same, for you are bidden to take it [...] our supreme concern is with a right faith in Jesus Christ.  
(Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.66-68)

Thus individual, personal conversion is emphasised; that is what God calls us towards.

I can identify with Gillet's (1993) appraisal that individual conversion is demanding, as there is a need to:

keep at the centre of one's discipleship the liveliness and reality of a personal relationship with God [which] demands a life of daily obedience and openness to the work of God's Spirit.  
(Gillet, 1993, p.31)

He also recognises that the intensity of an evangelical life can be hard to sustain, as a spiritual life which is based on an individual 'pick and mix' (Gillet, 1993, p.180-181) approach to practices and beliefs can ultimately lead to spiritual chaos and even to loss of faith. I have seen this myself in the form of former church members who have left the church. Identifying oneself as an evangelical Christian does not mean everything in your life is working well. But as Gillet (1993) contests:

the essence of evangelicalism [is] to encourage each individual believer to launch out on the adventure of faith, standing in the grace of God, testing all by the scriptures, and dependent on the Spirit's direction and discernment. In this process we are seeking to strengthen and broaden our own spirituality to provide a faithful, relevant and coherent basis for the whole of life.  
(Gillet, 1993, p.182)

To do this well he stresses the importance of identifying with, and being rooted in, an historical tradition of the community of faith.

Considering the root of different Christian traditions, in terms of their understanding of conversion, is significant for the exploration of faith within EPICC. As consultants we were holding in tension various different routes, which we did not acknowledge directly, toward understanding the knowledge of God's love, coupled with recognition of a general lack of

awareness of the reality of Christ within the human experience. Our quandary seemed to include wondering how to open up the spiritual root of transformation, naming any spiritual breakthrough that might unlock understanding as God at work, and determining what route of responsiveness was appropriate as a result. Resolution to our quandary might involve consideration of how God's revelation of himself to humanity appears in different forms through general revelation and common grace, but raises a bigger question about whether something more is needed? Our question focuses attention on what emphasis needs to be given to the revelation of Jesus Christ in daily work?

Keller and Alsdorf (2012) state:

there is no neutrality in the world. Everyone who does not acknowledge Christ as Lord is operating out of a false view of ultimate reality, while to confess Christ as Lord is to be in line with ultimate reality.  
(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.189)

Their view aligns with Barth's (see Brace 2005 [online]) insistence that Christ must be held absolutely central, his theology is grounded entirely within the revelation of Jesus Christ, and he argues that theology should learn to think from God's view towards the world, not from humanity's standpoint towards God. Brace (2005 [online]) explains that, for Barth, being saved (that is objectively reconciled, forgiven, and justified) has taken place for all people through Jesus Christ, and therefore that Jesus Christ is the source, ground, and goal of all created beings. Christ reveals humanity's true identity, but that is just the starting place; humanity needs to awaken to this spiritual reality and that sense of being woken up is at the essence of conversion. *Coming to know it and live in the new being of it*—is what makes one a Christian. This explanation of Barth's theology has established, in my mind, a profound new insight into the transcendent love of God. It asserts a new theological possibility for me, that conversion is *not a requirement for salvation* but a *response* to being saved in which we can grow as a living witness to the reality found in Christ. However, it is clear that many people do not live in awareness of, or belief in, Christ. This leads me to question: Why is it that some people acknowledge God and others don't? And, is EPICC's work really about awakening people to a sense of God's presence at work in organizational life?

At the retreat, in Session 2, SVB had talked about spiritual awakening to a certain extent when she mentioned a sense in which 'the scales fall off the eyes [...] an "aha" moment where people realise'. She was articulating an awareness of the 'springs of eternal life welling up within you', from a source, the well, which is forever alive. She was talking about it in the

context of how we (as Christian consultants) 'come and sit in your complexity, your mess, your confusion, your darkness, and help you see that you have within you, you individually, you as a team, you as an organization, the capacity to engage this'. SVB believed in the possibility for spiritual truth to be drawn out and released in relation to context.

However, Barth (see Rose, 2014 [online]) suggests that it is only divine revelation which makes knowledge of God's grace possible. Barth's pivotal argument is that:

God is not known through spiritual striving, moral reason, or historical experiences. God is known solely through God himself [...] For Barth it was therefore misguided to reflect on God from a standpoint outside faith in divine revelation.

(Rose, 2014, paragraphs 16 and 17 [online])

Divine revelation is a supernatural work of a transcendent God in communication to a finite humanity. It is interesting to reflect that Barth would have stood against much in the SAW movement as he would have prioritised explicitly that Jesus Christ is the foundation of truth. Barth had reacted against liberal theology, which had lost sight of the transcendent God. In particular he had reacted against Schleiermacher (1994 [1958], see p.xi) who had rooted understanding of Christianity from a position of interior subjectivity, and who was convinced that Christianity is rooted in the inner life of people.

I see some truth in both of these positions. I believe in a transcendent God and in Jesus Christ as the foundation of truth, but also that there is a personal location for knowing that truth within our inner being, which is where our ability to receive spiritual revelation, wisdom and insight impacts our life. When examining spirituality, Downey (1997) implies that the interior world is important and emphasises Christian spirituality as a lived experience, a way of living for God in Christ through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He outlined four levels of spiritual reality. Here, I compare these levels against the HDM, since I am using it as a tool to bring such spiritual reality to people's attention:

*Level one* – human beings as spirit in the world. The spiritual is a fundamental dimension of human beings. As spirit in the world, the human person has the capacity to receive and transmit life, to be open to being, life, and relationship. This concept is drawn from Karl Rahner who, Downey (1997) recorded, recognised human experience as a 'locus of God's revealing self-disclosure' (Downey, 1997, p.33). Similarly, the HDM recognises that spirit is central to human development.

*Level two* – the experience which realises the human capacity to be in relation with another, others and God. This includes the mystical, theological, ethical, psychological, political and

physical aspects of experience - the full range of human experience as it is brought to bear on the quest for integration through self-transcendence. Again, there are similarities to HDM in portraying a holistic concept, where the spiritual dimension incorporates both God and other. *Level three* – the formulation of insight about this lived reality, and expression of insights about experience. This may be expressed in sacred writings such as scripture, or other theological texts. It may also be formulated in popular wisdom such as song, legend and story. It may be expressed in the visual arts through painting, architecture and sculpture. It may be expressed in aural forms, such as liturgical or sacred music. It may also be found in other guises such as religious dress or devotions. This matches the doing aspect of the HDM; spirituality needs to be expressed as part of fulfilling our full potential. This aspect embraces the diversity of spiritual expression such as the Orthodox use of iconography, or the value placed on silence by the Quakers.

*Level four* – a disciplined study. Scholarly discipline studies the experience of the Christian spiritual life, regarding the spiritual life as an existential project. Here, Downey offers a robust definition:

Christian spirituality is the quest for an ever-deepening integration through union with God, in and through Jesus Christ by living in accord with the Holy Spirit.  
(Downey, 1997, p.42-43)

This matches the being aspect of the HDM, and also shows the importance of robust inquiry, including academic research into spirituality and reflection on practice.

Each level of spiritual reality can support and strengthen the living of one's faith.

In considering spiritual reality and how it becomes apparent and relevant to everyday life, it is easy to become embroiled in theological and philosophical difficulty. Reality can sum up many different strands of thought and is hard to define:

Reality is a good deal more complex than any single philosophical or metaphysical position could be likely to encompass [...] the nature of reality depends on where and how you look at it.  
(Wright, 2002, p.61)

Reality is ambiguous, multi-layered, both objective and subjective. It involves people trying to make sense of their own position and what is going on for them, and to connect this to the whole picture of their life. In doing this for myself, I need to return to the context of my inquiry - how faith is taken into work. I have explained that I am using the HDM to help surface some of the underlying territory of spiritual reality. By working with it from an evangelical mindset, I am bringing a Christian perspective which sees spiritual reality as involving a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. However, I am struggling to be

evangelical in my work, and have come to think that I might be better suited to help other Christians to explore their own faith journey, rather than to unpack spirituality in a general way with people from all persuasions. That is the focus Keller and Alsdorf (2012) take - they have explored how the Christian faith translates into impact within particular spheres of work.

All Christians can represent the reality and truth of Christ in the way they live, but the workplace is a specific arena for their example. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) present a variety of different ways in which Christians might be faithful in their work, and clarify that the main criterion is that Christians operate out of a Christian worldview. EPICC had begun to think that we did not need to be explicit about faith 'because of who we are, because of what we bring, we can ask different sorts of questions, we can look for different sorts of opportunities that might help to shift them.' Using the HDM we identified questions that might support people to reflect more deeply on their lives, for example, 'What really makes you tick? (inspiration); What would you really like to change? (embracing imperfection/reality); What has been your most insightful moment? (inspiration); What impact does the organization have on society (serving others)'. Whilst the questions are not overtly Christian, we were drawing on our awareness of the Christian worldview to provide a faith orientation to a reality which is hopeful, relational, and loving. However it has not been clear to me how to move towards sharing my understanding of spiritual reality with a world that does not encourage belief in Jesus Christ; and, should that be our aim?

During session 4 of the EPICC retreat we recognized that the tension between inspiration and reality was the central tension in the HDM. SVB had identified that 'inspiration should be the complete backdrop to this, it should be the absolute background which also has the potential to be fore-grounded [ ...] it's [ ...] all encompassing.' SVB continued, 'It's pulsating. It has a life of its own [ ...] sometimes you see it and sometimes you don't'. I think this is a real insight into the nature of our mutual struggle. Placing inspiration at the heart of human activity, which the HDM does, provides the opportunity for people to explore what inspiration means for them. The interplay between reality and inspiration, which stems from the Latin verb *inspirare*, meaning breathe or blow into from *in* (into), plus *spirare* (breathe), is fascinating to consider. The word inspiration was originally used in the sense of a divine or supernatural being imparting 'a truth or idea to someone' (Oxford Dictionary, 2012 [online]). The understanding stemming from this is that inspiration offers divine guidance. The word spirit is from the same Latin root - *spirare* (breathe); *spiritus* (breath, spirit) (in Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma*).

From the root words we can see that breath and spirit are aligned, they are the life force within each person. Therefore simply focusing on what inspiration lies at the heart of your life is a spiritual act. When one also considers that 'ultimate reality' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.189) is to be found in Jesus, it seems so clear that everything points to God.

If the grace of God is available to all of us, it is perplexing to encounter so many problems in the world which are hard to explain or deal with, and which seem to contradict the loving nature of God. Yet this is the context in which God has placed us, in which Christians are to live in responsiveness to God. Schwöbel's (2006 [online]) examination of Barth's theology says that he asks, "What else do we do in studying dogmatics and ethics than just 'bring together' Christianity and empirical reality?" (CD I/1, p. 319)' (Schwöbel, 2006, p.18 [online]). This is the actual work of theology and the Christian life. As such my research seems to echo Barth's real question which is, 'How do I mediate a personal certainty whose peculiar grounding on history and whose relationship to present reality has become theoretically clear to me, practically to others? (CD I/1, p. 319)' (Schwöbel, 2006, p.18 [online]). Arguably, I have less theoretical and theological clarity, but my heart is devoted to the same concern. Having had a brief glimpse of Barth's positioning of the centrality of Christ, I remain unsure about to translate this into human experience: how should humans live in light of the reality of Christ? And I am still working out how this truth translates into work contexts.

Keller and Alsdorf (2012, p.23) acknowledge the complexity of working from a gospel worldview can be confusing. That acknowledgement alone gives me comfort as I have found it confusing myself, and, despite trying, EPICC did not have a clear way of enabling the spiritual hope, which we knew something of, to be released. Keller and Alsdorf lay out a set of propositions which stem from different aspects of a Christian worldview such as: furthering social justice, being honest and evangelising your colleagues, doing skilful work, creating beauty, glorifying God by influencing culture, being joyful and grateful through the ups and downs, doing work that you are passionate about, and making as much money as you can so you can be as generous as you can (p.22). Their work has helped me to realise that sometimes it is appropriate to be explicit, and sometimes it is appropriate not to be explicit. What really matters is living deeply from within a Christian worldview as that colours all your actions. In the process of grappling with practice, theology, and then practice again, my own faith is changing and deepening as I look more carefully at the basis of my Christian life. Yet the

question of why some people can acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and others do not is still problematic. This problem is one to be carried forward for further exploration.

### *3.2.5 Topic 3: The impact of Christian spirituality on our consultancy ideas*

EPICC wanted to bring something of our own faith and experience into work. We wanted to help people to become aware of how spiritual reality impacts all of life. We had assumptions about our own faith and capability, but we were trying to work out together what the difference we might bring would look like. In our debate about our own first steps in working with organizations, we could not easily identify anything that was notably different to a normal consultancy approach. We felt we could start either by looking at their current reality - their problems and issues, or we could start by looking at what's good about their organization and where they want to be - their vision, in order to identify the way for them to get there. We arrived at two main questions to engage clients. Firstly, what do you want to get away from? This was to open up a conversation about their current, possibly negative, reality. Secondly, what is your vision of what might/could be? This was to open up a conversation about their ideal, hopefully positive, future reality. KW then identified a third core question, what is stopping you? JK agreed this was a real issue for clients as talking about ideas was one thing, but it is hard to put ideas into action. Our retreat was a minor example of this point since we were looking at our own reality and vision of where we thought we could make a difference and finding it hard to impact anyone tangibly.

KW said, 'I'm sitting here thinking are we really getting onto what it is that we can actually do?' But JK thought that talk was in itself valuable, 'I think the answer is that we are not going to do anything [...] in the old consultancy sense. What we are going to do is talk about it, we are going to help them talk it through [...] We have refined [...] a set of questions, some headings for discussion that we'd like to talk through [...] and *then* we can decide what we're going to do about it.' JK went on, 'no traditional consultancy intervention produced by big firms, little firms, psychologists, people from all directions, has got something like this moving. Getting something like this moving has got to be something different. The trouble with saying to someone it's got to be something different is you don't prove it [...] That's why we're different.' JK was happy that we were offering something 'very loose' and that we just needed to be in conversation. He was forceful about his view, 'I've been a management consultant for 25 years and I know that no pre-planned, off the shelf, intervention will get you to where you want to be.' I conveyed the work of James (2004) who says that OD takes place when a safe

space is created for people to gather, and believes this is where God's grace can show up. Transformation can take place because a space has been created where grace can be at work. I suggested that, 'Although it doesn't seem very powerful to say I'm going to create a space to just talk [...] it's actually probably the most powerful thing you can do.' SVB agreed that creating a safe space for 'world class listening' to understand issues, invoking questions such as 'what stops you' and 'what can you do about it', supported group work around positive, solution-based conversations. We were saying that what we could do for clients was to host a conversational space, that would be shaped by our underlying faith based world-view, and hope that something positive would be released. It was quite an idealistic and optimistic approach.

KW was continually trying to shape our offer more precisely, 'we are talking about small group discussion, working together, co-creating, appreciative inquiry<sup>28</sup> sorts of things.' SVB added, 'the output of that is that you have people in the organization who already *know* what the issues are [...] but we create the space in which they are able to bring those up and start to act on them'. KW was still wondering, 'what's different about the sort of discussion we'd have?' JK returned to the notion of it being about our presence, 'Nothing we bring methodologically makes it safer for people to do these things. What we bring is an attitude, a state of mind about this.' KW began to see we could offer 'some fresh ways of looking' at issues. He also felt that the best first step to obtaining clients was to get 'very close to an individual. I always try to work with them on an initial small thing', and he then said they would invite him to do more with them. The strategy to overcome resistance to change was thus aligned with the idea of small wins. KW was then keen to use the EPICC approach to support staff in organizations to adapt to 'a new reality in life' in terms of change.

During Session 3 of the EPICC retreat, we picked up on the difficulty people have in being able to change. KW said, 'There are some people which, even though this is staring me in the face, [say] this doesn't fit my view of the world therefore I'm not going to accept it.' He later continued 'they have this view of the world, everything goes through a filter which says "this is what I believe and what works and what doesn't work". If it doesn't fit you just reject it.' We felt that conventional wisdom kept people away from reflecting, and that people had no time to think about things. We explored this in the context of the reality aspect of the HDM where reality so often seems hard to deal with as people become, amongst other things, time poor,

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<sup>28</sup> Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a change management approach that focuses on identifying what is working well, analyzing why it is working well and then doing more of it.

self-centred, dis-engaged and dis-spirited. We contrasted resistance to change with the ideal of adaptability, flexibility and agility. Later in our discussion, as we explored how change can happen through small steps, I linked this to the work of the Holy Spirit when I said, 'You are planting seeds. If you have spoken out of a place from the Holy Spirit it's never wasted [...]. This is not a perfect world, we're going to experience varying degrees of discomfort in being involved in what we're trying to be involved in.'

The work of the Holy Spirit is a huge dimension for further exploration. Gillet (1993) emphasizes that evangelicals should test spiritual experience against historical criteria regarding the distinguishing marks of the work of the Holy Spirit:

1. Does it exalt Jesus Christ?
2. Does it attack the kingdom of darkness?
3. Does it honour the scriptures?
4. Does it promote sound doctrine?
5. Does it lead to an outpouring of love towards God and man?

Gillet pronounces that 'the only sure test is conformity with the revealed will of God in scripture' (Gillet, 1993, p.16). When considering this in light of Hilborn's (2015 [online]) list of key evangelical characteristics (in section 3.2.2), I feel I have been working through what conversion means for myself, and I have been personally challenged. I am mindful that the scriptures and the Holy Spirit move in one direction, they point the way to Jesus. So if my actions are to be fruitful, and need to be aligned with God's Holy Spirit, should I aim towards Gillet's areas in my work?

EPICC's consultancy offer was in line with our earlier conversations about transformation - we wanted to support genuine change, and we saw organizations as places where it was possible for such change to be enacted. The desire for change is a deep characteristic within Christian life. Miller (2007b) draws on the work of Bosch (1991) to highlight that, 'Christian mission is, in essence, all about transforming – "it refuses to accept reality as it is and aims at changing it" (Bosch, 1991, p.xv)' (Miller, 2007b, p.24). Miller continues:

most people in the Faith at Work movement refuse to accept the marketplace reality as it is; they wish to change or transform it, in some fashion, driven by the teachings of their faith.  
(Miller, 2007b, p.24-25)

Miller recognises that there are different conceptions of transformation which include orientations towards personal salvation through Jesus Christ and overcoming sin, as well as a

more 'social gospel' (Rauschenbusch, 1917) which emphasizes bringing the kingdom of God on earth.

In considering what is distinctive about my work, and EPICC's consultancy offer, it is in essence that our intentions are underpinned by the concept of *metanoia*, and influenced by our understanding of Christian conversion. James (2012) writes that *metanoia*:

means transformation, the result of repenting and having received forgiveness [...] *Metanoia* sees every problem as an opportunity for transformation rather than blame [...] This process of intentionally turning away from past behaviour is a core part of a Christian's understanding of individual change.  
(James, 2012, p.68)

EPICC talked about the idea of 'letting go of old identities and the need to control, and being available for letting come'. This conceptually is about change, transition, shifts, and movement. We asked ourselves if we were really about enabling people to have 'epiphanies'. The connection between thinking and doing are linked in that as we grow in awareness of the reality of the kingdom of God we can align ourselves with a new emerging world.

As EPICC we were linking change to repentance, and assuming that truth was involved in the process of movement away from something negative (whatever that might be) and towards something positive (without being able to name what that was). We finally arrived at the word 'catalysts' to describe our role and what we were doing. As soon as this word came up there was a burst of enthusiasm for it. JK described a catalyst as something that 'brings energy [...] that gets [something] to highly reactive. It gets something to where there is a potential for change. It gets it going without it being used up. And then the change continues afterwards. The catalyst is not involved in the ongoing reaction.' SVB understood this, 'you should be able to walk away. So we can walk away, because actually they are doing the work, we're not. All we are doing is holding the space.' KW said, 'That's brilliant. That's what I was looking for. I can understand that.' KW then probed further, 'what is it we really bring [as catalysts]. We've got a deep understanding of things that are going wrong'. And SVB added, 'And people. We've got a deep understanding of human interaction.' But AH felt that 'lots of others do that'. However, later we were able to agree on a summary that essentially our work was 'about who we are as much as what we are going to do, but we are creating this space, being catalysts for change, with a deep understanding of human beings'. In trying to assess what was distinctive that could cause such a spark, I see now that what could genuinely set us apart was the work of the Holy Spirit living in us, and working through us, to bring holistic

transformation. The Holy Spirit opens up the sense of something new being manifested, and that has particular nuances in different contexts.

Change is a constant in organizational life as people, products and projects come and go. However, Senge *et al* (2005) acknowledge that 'most change processes are superficial because they don't generate the depth of understanding and commitment that is required for sustaining change' (Senge *et al*, 2005, p.86). Recognising that a lot of what passes for change in organizations is 'superficial' strengthens my conviction that working with spiritual roots is central to genuine transformation, and if I judge this to be the case, then adopting approaches to transformation which do not address this dimension are likely to be fruitless. Senge recognises that there is a 'larger field for change' and that by being aware of this people can move from 're-creating the past, to manifesting or realising an emerging future' (Senge *et al*, 2005, p.14). It is an activity of consciousness and choice. Senge *et al* encapsulate a realisation of life beyond the mundane, and acknowledge invisible forces are working to guide and unfold our lives. They suggest that learning is not just about cycles of action and reflection that lead to new actions, but can also be a 'process where we learn instead from a future that has not yet happened and from continually discovering our part in bringing that future to pass' (Senge *et al*, 2005, p.86). The sense of a future reality that we can be co-creators in is an inspiring and exciting vision. What excites me is how these authors convey expectancy and hope. Whereas religious conversations are often based on historic narratives and long-fought over interpretations, Senge *et al* seem to lift us off the page into a dynamic current moment which is brimming with possibility. We stand at doorways of choice and can be responsible for stepping into something profound, inspiring and compelling. That, for me, is a vision of organizational change as it links to the kingdom of God.

Recognition of the kingdom of God is related to the concept of wholeness, about not being divided, and I see there being a deeper theological process at work in all this. When a person accepts Jesus he or she is rescued or delivered from sin and separation from God. This is salvation (Greek: *sótéria* from *Sozo*: to save). Salvation is the first step toward regaining complete *wholeness*, but it involves an ongoing process. Although we become a 'new creation' in Jesus (as 2 Corinthians 5.17 states) we are not immediately transformed. Our emotions, will and thinking need the ongoing and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our responsibility is to yield to God so that our spirits will bear the image of God. Fletcher (2005 [online]) states that through the work of the Holy Spirit within us we have an opportunity to

progress *in our souls* toward wholeness. God desires for us to be whole, not-divided, to be one. This is a far-reaching vision of humanity that does not happen at once, but can happen as we surrender our life more deeply into God's care. I think that's what it means to 'work out our salvation' as Philippians 2.12 instructs. Fletcher speaks of a process of restoration and healing that begins once we accept that Jesus is the way to be:

Various issues of the heart prevent us from being able to be like Jesus. Damaged emotions, belief in lies – especially of Satan's lies – and unhealed relationships all contribute to our inability to live a life like Christ – a life that fully glorifies God the Father. The more we allow Christ into the places of our hearts and minds, the greater opportunity we have to be restored or healed. Healing and restoration are a part of the sanctification process. The more healing we experience – especially on the inside – the more our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit. As this occurs, our lives become a better witness or ambassador for Christ.  
(Fletcher, 2005, paragraph 17 [online])

As we live, we have the opportunity to be transformed into the image of Christ with ever-increasing glory (greater wholeness):

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.  
(2 Corinthians 3.18)

This is the way in which the kingdom of God is emergent; it is as we yield to God in our lives that more of Jesus' authority, power and love is seen. Godwin (2011) says:

The Kingdom of God is not a philosophy [...] It's the power of the age to come released on earth today. It's the rule of Jesus.  
(Godwin, 2011, Section 2)

The kingdom of God is both now and not yet. The not yet part is a dramatic foretold restoration, but for my research it is the 'now' part that is meaningful. The internal wrestling that Christians face is in the arena of ongoing sanctification. The apostle Paul shows that ideologies and differing perspectives will attempt to counter our faith, but that growth in Christ leads to unity:

until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup>We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ'. We are urged to speak the truth, the truth of Jesus.  
(Ephesians 4.13-15)

So, if I acknowledge, as an evangelical, that Christ is the central spiritual truth then I perceive all other things to be related to and stem from that foundation. Deep in the process of

conversion is the movement from being out of step with God, to becoming submissive to His will and kingdom purpose. This deep change influences our outlook, even if it is not easy to describe in words, and it carries through our thinking, even if our thinking is jumbled. We have a belief, and sense of knowing, we operate from a wellspring of life. In discerning what change is appropriate, I draw on my sense that reality is about the ultimate spiritual reality, which revolves around Jesus Christ, and this influences my understanding as a consultant. I recognize that every moment is a spiritual moment in that the Holy Spirit can convict, can act, can transform, can affect situations and people. As a Christian, that Holy Spirit is always available and present. The impact of this awareness is that I have a faith that reaches into the space of resistance to stir up something of kingdom truth in the moment. It is this influence which impacted my thinking towards the end of the EPICC retreat, as we reflected on the meaning of our work within organizations and attempted to reach some kind of conclusions about where we had got to.

KW said 'change can be seen as a mechanistic process, of setting up programmes and projects, tasks and activities. What we're saying is that we take an entirely different view and it's all about people. Engaging them, motivating them, recognizing them, valuing them and all that stuff. That's what fundamental change really requires.' SVB recognized that change projects involve 'working with the complexity of human responses to change.' AH commented on his experiences of 'selling' personal transformation; he identified, 'actually, I could never get beyond "I can't tell you what the cause/effect model [is] that's going on in this process. What I do know is it works." I know it works because I've done it before.' He suggested that people had to trust that you knew what you were doing. His response indicates that at the heart of change is a somewhat mysterious process, even though it is couched in rationalistic language. I cited the example of an interview I had done (Howard and Smith, 2011) with the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police. The Chief Constable had increased performance in his organization by cutting back on bureaucratic performance indicators to focus on a few simple things, the important things, which were encapsulated in the vision and values. And the vision and values stemmed largely from his spiritual (Catholic) background which encompassed a sense of his vocation. His leadership was obliquely influenced by his Christian spiritual understanding.

I summed up that our work was not about bringing in a pre-meditated intervention, but about 'working in real time with real people', by which I meant being aware of the transformational

potential at any given moment and dealing with the whole person by being aware of their spiritual life. I also commented that 'it's about having the courage to take on whatever comes out in that space really', which referred to our own capability about being available to be used by God to speak with wisdom into the situation in an appropriate way. AH and SVB agreed with my summing up. I continued that to do this we needed 'a depth of understanding about what might be happening and then actually deal with it in real time [...] it's a bit like a gigantic learning set' which made an assumption that we did possess such a depth of understanding. Unfortunately, as the case study in Chapter 5 shows, JK and I did not live up to this expectation with our first client. AH, and KW liked the 'real-time' aspect and so our EPICC proposition became 'we are a catalyst and we bring energy and experience to work alongside you with your people in real time without pre-fixed solutions.' I commented, 'which is scary'; it certainly daunted me as a prospect. But we had arrived at an agreement that such a space would help to 'release the answers from within' as SVB put it.

In my summing up of where we had got to over the course of the retreat I was confident as I said 'I think basically we can hold the space, and have courage, and take risks'. At the same time I added, 'Whilst we are holding this space in real time, what we bring is depth of tools, techniques and experience, understanding'. I think I was articulating an idealistic view of what we might become as a consultancy, but it struck a chord with JK who said 'I spent 25 years [in a well known consultancy]; I worked in the old form of intervention and solution and I know that there is more, there's a different way that is needed to make things really work.' I found JK's backing really reassuring, as I felt my viewpoint was based more on conviction than experience. I was looking to the others to bring their experience into our shared future. SVB also claimed to be experienced, 'so what makes us different is the fact that we've been there, done that, got the T-shirt and recognize there's a need for more depth.' KW added that we had 'some really important messages about why [our work is] different from the traditional way of going about it which I think are really important. They are differentiators.'

### *3.2.6 Emerging Theme 3 - Resistance as sin*

EPICC's retreat was focused on how to find ways of engaging with clients to support organizational change that valued people. And yet we knew that change can be difficult; it is hard for people to change. We recognized that creating a safe space for people may enable grace to be present. We also recognized that our presence as facilitators, acting as catalysts, may help to release new ways of looking at issues. But we acknowledged that at the heart of

change is some sort of mysterious process, and for me this is where the spiritual root is significant. What is happening in this space of change?

Keller and Alsdorf (2012) describe work as a good thing, which God designed as part of the created world; all work has dignity; work supports the cultivation of the earth and human community; God established work as a way of serving and providing for people. However, they also recognize the complicating factor of sin. Reflecting on their work whilst writing my thesis has developed my comprehension of sin. Early in my Christian life I thought of sin as being acts of disobedience against the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20.1-17), for example stealing or lying. Latterly, I have grown in my recognition of myself as a sinner in line with Romans 3.23, 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'; my sin is in relation to God's glory and I am far out of alignment with God's pure holiness. In appreciating what sin is in a new way, I have grown in my understanding of why God's grace is so completely necessary as Ephesians 2.8 explains, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.' Awareness of sin enables us to realize that we need God's grace. Fairhurst (2012) writes that 'we are enmeshed with this sin in the world' (Fairhurst, 2012, p.8) and we need to see 'just how badly it is harming us and others, before we can receive [...] healing' (Fairhurst, 2012, p.8). Fairhurst recognises that 'good spiritual direction doesn't ignore the extent of the diagnosis of sin' (Fairhurst, 2012, p.7) and describes sin as ways in which 'we have acted out the choice of separation from God' (Fairhurst, 2012, p.6). She raises awareness of how sin, at a macro level, plays out in all sorts of situations through our work and the economy.

I have become increasingly aware that how sin is viewed is significant. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) link sin to some of the complexities and realities within organizational life, realities which can seem hard to fathom. They explain how the curse of sin (described as human rebellion against God and resulting alienation from him on p.84) makes work difficult as work has become fruitless, pointless, and selfish; work also reveals our idols. Their explanation of idols draws on the first and second of the Old Testament's Ten Commandments:

"You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20.3). What does it mean to have other gods? The commandment says "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Exodus 20.4-5).  
(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.131<sup>29</sup>)

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<sup>29</sup> Citing the New International Version of the *Holy Bible*

And they continue:

we have an alternate or counterfeit God if we take anything in creation and [...] love, serve and derive meaning from it more than the true God [...] "making an image" of something is [...] a spiritual and psychological (process).  
(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.131)

Their interpretation of idols impacted me as it shows that we have replaced God with other things, things which we think give us security, control, significance, satisfaction and beauty.

Keller and Alsdorf (2012) articulate that the root of our difficulties is 'our separation from God' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.87). This separation is evidenced through the vagaries of human aspiration and action in the gloomy reality of a broken world:

Because of God's intentions for our work – to contribute to the flourishing of the world – we have glimpses of what we could accomplish. But because of the fall of the human race, our work is also profoundly frustrating, never as fruitful as we want, and often a complete failure. This is why so many people inhabit the extremes of idealism and cynicism [...] Idealism says, "through my work I am going to change things, make a difference, accomplish something new, bring justice to the world." Cynicism says, "nothing really changes. Don't get your hopes up. Do what it takes to make a living. Don't let yourself care too much. Get out of it whatever you can".  
(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.95)

Keller and Alsdorf pinpoint the nature of the quest:

There is a gap – or chasm – between the divine and us. Some religions say we must cross that divide through sacrifice, rituals, transformation of consciousness, or ethical practice. But somehow we need to bridge that gap between God and ourselves. How will we find it?  
(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.126)

The authors then present a variety of ways in which the truth of Christ can break through to change situations and contexts for the better. These include: consolation resulting from the story of redemption, so that we are not discouraged by the frustrations of our present reality; tranquility and rest found only in Jesus Christ, so that our work is not geared toward the idols of money and power, but for the satisfaction of a job well done and to value relationships; freedom to serve God and neighbor, rather than trying to make a name for ourselves; an alternative storyline for work, whereby we draw on a new moral compass, and have a source of sound ethical guidelines and a durable inner power, to operate as partners with God in his love and care for the world. Keller and Alsdorf portray the Bible's view of work as 'compelling and [...] helpful in all cultures, social settings, and vocations [...] because it is so rich and multi-dimensional' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.152). When it comes to change, the Christian perspective:

means thinking out the implications of the gospel world view and God's purposes for your whole work life and for the whole of the organization under your influence.<sup>30</sup> (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.169)

Whilst Keller and Alsdorf (2012) have emphasised that change is related to our relationship with God, James (2012) has taken investigation of change a step further; he has explored how Christian faith can be integrated into a professional approach towards organizational change. James believes that any transformation towards that which is good stems from God's grace:

At the heart of any organizational change, whether acknowledged or not, is common grace – God's Spirit breathing life into dry bones. This breath of life reconciles relationships, removes unjust structures and creates shared direction and energy for the future [...] The Christian faith has a lot to say about change – how it happens and who makes it happen. Yet so often we carry out our visioning exercises, strategic planning, evaluations and change management processes as if God was not there. (James, 2012, p.9)

James recognises, 'if we want to influence behaviour change, we have no choice but to engage with the spiritual' (James, 2012, p.10).

The work of James (2012) clearly links Christian faith with transformation, and yet recognises that Christian organizations and individuals themselves are often resistant to change. This is a significant insight, highlighting that even if we know 'the truth' it does not always set us free from the quagmire of politics and conflict that can emerge in organizational life; as James writes, 'integrating faith is not a magic formula' (James, 2012, p.15). James's book *Inspiring Change*<sup>31</sup> is relevant to me as an evangelical attempting to work as a consultant in organizations from a Christian perspective. His presentation of Christian organizations as less than perfect strikes a chord with my own experiences. His desire to see God acknowledged and relationship with him deepened matches my own. His descriptions of change get into the heart of the 'messy complexity' that EPICC had recognized; James lays a trail for the type of territory we might find ourselves in.

James (2012), like Senge *et al* (2005), also recognizes 'many organizational change processes fail because they remain too superficial' (James, 2012, p.60); James, however, draws on his Christian perspective to support change. His chapter on creating space for transformation

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<sup>30</sup> We each have the capacity to influence our surroundings even if we are not in a leadership position.

<sup>31</sup> He structures his book around seven key processes which enable organizational change which are: Ensuring Commitment, Gaining Understanding, Letting Go, Energising Hope, Planning for Change, Making it Happen and the role of the Facilitator.

explores 'letting go' and 'energising hope' as essential elements and that 'transformation is essentially a process of death and rebirth' (James, 2012, p.61). He also recognises that:

change requires space [...] creating and holding space is essential – space for the organization to stop and think about how things have been; how they are now; how they want them to be in the future.  
(James, 2012, p.61)

He describes the need for 'safe spaces' to create the opportunity for a turning point. James explains, 'Letting go is a vital [...] part of any change process' and that, 'Positive and lasting change can be likened to an "inner revolution" that arises from shifts in our mindset – a change in our perception of reality' (James, 2012, p.62). He links change to our worldview:

When enough new information contradicts the worldview we have built up about ourselves or our organization, we question and even revise our thinking and behaviour. We have to take it personally. This is never easy. We all find it difficult to change comfortable, habitual ways of working and perceptions of the world, which have become deeply ingrained. It often involves admitting failure. Such pain is an integral part of change [...] it involves addressing the fears that keep us locked into present ways of operating.  
(James, 2012, p.62)

James (2012) identifies that 'the power for change comes from our consciences' (James, 2012, p.66) when we see that our behaviour does not match our values and there is a gap between who we are and who we want to be. Then 'moving from a shift in perception to a willed response involves taking responsibility' (James, 2012, p.66) as we acknowledge weakness or failure. It is at this point that James uses the Bible to help people awaken their conscience, stop blaming others, and reflect on what they have personally contributed to the messy situation they are in. Fairhurst (2012) also recognises the 'human temptation towards scapegoating' (Fairhurst, 2012, p.17) which finds ultimate resolution in:

Jesus lifted up on the cross – yes we'll see a scapegoat *and* something of our own part in sending him there through our sin and blaming others for what we can't bear to see in ourselves.  
(Fairhurst, 2012, p.18)

James is:

a firm believer in lament. We have to get to grips with what went wrong and not gloss over things. This hampers our ability to transform.  
(James, 2012, p.67)

It is in this climate that James then sends people off to pray on their own and listen to God which 'allows God to bring conviction, not people to condemn each other' (James, 2012, p.67). James is reaching right into the heart of repentance with his principle of letting go, which recognises sin (or the gap between God and man), and encourages people to turn to God in

trust for new hope. In his experience the prayer time invites the hopeful, positive element of grace, healing and forgiveness, and brings *metanoia*.

What I find refreshing from James (2012) is that he is putting into action the truth he knows works. He has the courage to deal with issues from a Christian perspective in his work with leaders and organizations. In looking at the aspirations of EPICC I can see some parallels, but acknowledge that we as a group were not as clear about our process of change; we were in two-minds about whether or not to be explicit about our faith, and also we were attempting to bring whatever expertise we did have into mainstream organizations rather than overtly Christian ones. Ultimately our wavering about faith proved to be an untenable position for me, but our process of exploration has led me to become more explicit about my evangelical Christian foundation. I am drawn to James's writings as he ties together thoughts and actions that have helped to identify and surface my own motivation to be engaged in efforts to impact organizations from a Christian perspective. He embodies the theological sentiments expressed by Green (1990) who wrote:

The very aim of theology is to enable the transformation of Christians so that they become the conscious and active agents of the transformation of history at God's behest. Our definition [of theology] needs to stress [...] that Christian theology implies challenge, response and transformation. One cannot do theology without expecting *change*.

(Green, 1990, p.13, emphasis mine)

Change and transformation are vital dimensions of living, and can provide evidence of a genuine life of faith. What my research has helped me to see more powerfully is that resistance to change may be as a result of sin, and that is why, to overcome resistance to change, receptivity to God's grace is central. I see that faith needs to be prioritised in a person's life, since faith which brings change that is godly is worth pursuing. My central motivation has become to support others to be open to the process of change and development which occurs through a life of faith.

### **3.3 Summary of learning and next research cycles**

This chapter has explored the major theme arising from my first action research cycle: the identification of my Christian perspective as evangelical. I have recognised that other Christians may interpret the Christian faith in a different way to me, but that I hold a particular understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Through my investigation I have recognised the significance of being clear about a person's spiritual roots, as beliefs translate into practice

and impact what we do. Close consideration of my own Christian perspective encompassed my exploration of spiritual reality in relation to the themes of grace and sin. I now understand the grace of God is for all whether acknowledged or not, and see sin as the ultimate cause of resistance to change. A new question emerging from my research is: why is it that some people can acknowledge Jesus Christ whilst others do not? It is not the purpose of my thesis to address this question directly, but it does require further investigation.

My first cycle of research explored the nature of transformational change, and how EPICC understood it. We experienced a tension about whether we should be explicit or implicit about the Christian faith, which we did not resolve. AH and KW seemed to veer from being explicitly Christian, whilst JK and I were moving towards it. SVB did not express a firm view either way. The insights I gained from my learning have been carried forward into my consultancy practice.

The first insight is around working on a one-to-one basis. This stemmed from KW's suggestion that the best first step to obtaining clients was to get 'very close to an individual'. KW felt that further work emerged from small wins on a personal basis in individual relationships; this was his strategy to overcome resistance to change in the client system. I felt this was a simple and constructive approach and one that I could put into action in my professional practice. JK, as an EPICC colleague, presented me with an opportunity to put KW's approach into action; my second and third action research cycles show how my subsequent work with JK as his spiritual mentor began and was enacted. These two cycles are analysed in Chapter 4. I invested time into working with JK in order to develop ideas, refine a service offer for clients, and sustain my thinking.

A second core insight is around the value of conversations. During the EPICC retreat I was able to appreciate anew the value of talking and how it enables relationship. I saw that my work using the HDM was 'a vehicle for conversation and the value stems from the conversation and not just the model itself'. This helped me to recall that my real passion is around spiritual mentoring, rather than use of the HDM per se, 'For me, what is at the heart of what I want to do is to evoke Spirit and spiritual formation. The model is a tool that has given me some sort of vehicle and gateway into the territory.' The EPICC retreat grew my confidence about using the HDM simply, as a tool to open up conversations, and it strengthened my conviction about my potential to operate as a spiritual mentor. I became more aware of how conversations

about God do help to bring clarity, although I also think that talk is balanced out by ensuring that ideas which emerge from it are acted on. Paying attention to the sacred space in which leadership is enacted stimulated my continued desire to find ways to support spiritual formation. Chapter 4 outlines my understanding of spiritual formation and how I have attempted to enable it for others.

The last core insight has to do with EPICC's ability to operate as change agents and facilitators. The retreat planted thoughts about working with issues in real-time, and contained some assumptions about our capability as facilitators to do this. The issue of *metanoia* (which for me means letting go and turning towards) was identified as being a significant factor in any genuine change. With the concepts of real-time and *metanoia* highlighted as being important for genuine transformation, my colleagues and I wanted to position ourselves as 'catalysts' in the change process to help stimulate turning points for change. In Chapter 5 I examine my fourth research cycle, a client case study, where EPICC attempted to put into practice some of these ideas. This case study provides insights into my capacity to operate as a change agent, and the difficulties I experienced.

I now turn to Chapter 4, which examines my second and third research cycles, and the theme of spiritual formation. I talked with JK about the ways in which God can be encountered through work, and how there is an element of common grace at work. God is a real force, whose Spirit blows in ways we cannot easily fathom:

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.  
(John 3.8)

(the Greek for *Spirit* is the same as that for *wind*). The Spirit works in ways we do not fully comprehend. Whilst foundational biblical teachings are outlined in Hebrews 6.1-2 (belief in Christ, repentance from sin, faith, baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, hope in the resurrection and awareness of God's eternal judgment) the influence of the Holy Spirit in people's lives is a mysterious phenomenon and is present to people at any stage in their journey. My evangelical Christian perspective has led me to prioritise development in the spiritual life. In the next chapter I explore how I can support individual Christians to grow towards spiritual maturity. In Chapter 5, I expand on how I can help people, using the HDM, within a group setting.

## **CHAPTER 4: ON ENABLING SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

### **4.1 Overview of Chapter 4**

Now that I understand myself to be an evangelical Christian I can evaluate some of the actions that followed the EPICC retreat from that perspective. This chapter shows how I have offered spiritual guidance in a professional capacity in order to support spiritual formation within work contexts. My second action research cycle was decisive in that it led to JK inviting me to become his spiritual mentor; this supported my sense of vocation around the role. My third action research cycle gives a detailed account of the SLJ process<sup>32</sup> I used to support spiritual formation with JK. This chapter contains my analysis of both research cycles.

My reflective analysis stems both from being the mentor, and from my consideration of the experience of the mentoree.<sup>33</sup> Different insights emerged from within each role and in section 4.3 I have used these two roles as sub-headings to help illuminate particular insights. Meaning from Chapter 3 continues to have resonance in terms of: *transformation* as understood from within my Christian perspective, looking for evidence of the *grace of God* at work in the spiritual life, and the impact of Christian thinking and living in the world which is full of *resistance* to God (sin). These aspects are explored and put into practice explicitly and implicitly within the content of the conversations between JK and myself.

### **4.2 Making sense of the data – Research Cycles 2 and 3**

The EPICC retreat gave me a growing conviction, which I believe was influenced by the Holy Spirit, about my capacity to work as a spiritual mentor. Having recognised there is a balance between the inner (being) and outer (doing) life, and that who I am can be seen through what I do, I have grown in confidence and become more explicit about the role of faith in work. In my attempts to have spiritual integrity I have used the HDM as a tool to encourage people to explore being and doing in work contexts. The HDM has enabled me to provide a space for conversations that can encompass spirituality. Further to the initial design of the SLJ approach I began to refine it so that it could reflect my Christian perspective as I worked to support the spiritual formation of leaders. The actual doing of work as spiritual mentor has simultaneously shaped my understanding of the HDM. This chapter reveals how my Christian perspective has impacted my professional outlook; how I have interpreted the HDM from within my perspective when I have done work with an individual. Research cycle two mainly shows that

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<sup>32</sup> Described in chapter 2.5.1

<sup>33</sup> The use of the term 'mentoree' or 'mentee' is used as a noun to mean 'one being mentored' in the context of work with a mentor

JK was keen, available and interested in trialing the SLJ process to understand more about the HDM. His responsiveness led to research cycle three in which we continued to investigate ideas that had emerged during the retreat.

#### *4.2.1 Topic 4: Spiritual mentoring and spiritual formation*

JK had been considering how ideas from the retreat might fit with his SCM<sup>34</sup> and was open to learning. He developed a seminar for his previous employer to 'test out' some of his thinking and invited me along to help him reflect on it afterwards. The reflection turned into a general discussion at which point JK offered to be a participant, and to review, the SLJ process, 'I could see this being useful if we were applying the model to me as an individual, but at the same time, we were linking it to [...] the SCM'. He thought this would lead to 'a richer picture of the way we would use the combination so we would be doing development, of, if you like "The EPICC pitch".' JK continued, 'I do think it's important for me to spend a bit of time getting into the HDM more [...] and the only way [...] is to apply it to yourself. You can't just stand outside it and analyse it.' This was a great opening for me, 'I am really excited about that, [...] if you are willing [...] we can shape it together. Part of the output would be [to] use the model in [...] leadership development. So that's a win-win isn't it?' I felt excited, and affirmed, as I could see all sorts of possibilities arising from this work. I knew I had something to offer and it was great that a former senior partner of a consultancy firm clearly valued it. JK agreed to me recording the sessions and using them as part of my research data.

I was encouraged that our arrangement stemmed partly from me having shared my own inner truth, my Christian identity, and partly from JK recognising the importance of the HDM for himself. We were able to explore questions that were mutually important to both of us. Cockerton (1994) recognised that evangelical spirituality is deficient in offering individuals guidance on the spiritual life suggesting that:

practical, individually tailored, help has been rather conspicuously absent [...] what is needed is some way whereby individuals [...] can be helped with their particular problems. [...] We also need something akin to what in other traditions is called "Spiritual Direction" or "Counselling".  
(Cockerton, 1994, p.22)

JK's receptivity to me meant I was able to be supportive to him, as a guide to the spiritual territory. Our relationship, using the SLJ, would be instrumental in examining deep convictions about how Christian spirituality is relevant to business life.

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<sup>34</sup> Social Capital Model, described in chapter 2.5.2.2

JK valued our conversational exchange and was learning from it. He mused, 'I think the question of do you need God, can't good people get this (SAW themes) just as much, is a key question. And I suspect good people "can" get this almost as much [...] But then [it's] being able to talk about my personal spiritual beliefs that led me to support this. Because you are right, you asked the question earlier on, it's when I became a Christian again, the importance of this really started to come forward.' The territory of spirituality, faith, economics and the workplace is one that many Christians are grappling with as Higginson (2012) demonstrates. He believes that Christian faith can be an enormous power for good in the global economy if it focuses on stimulating enterprise, reducing poverty, promoting integrity, ensuring sustainability, and fostering discipleship. He thinks that Christians are more likely to be credible witnesses if they can show their faith has something useful to say about economic issues.

Higginson, in his role as Editor of *Faith in Business Quarterly*, recently included an article by Weaver (2016) which highlighted the June 2015 Encyclical *Laudato si* presented by Pope Francis. The Pope challenges the world to recover Christian values and goals and:

he calls for a correct understanding of the spiritual meaning of work, seeing work as the setting for personal growth, for "creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others and giving glory to God" (paragraph 127).

(Weaver, 2016, p. 23)

This article draws attention to the need for our encounter with Jesus Christ to be evident in our relationship with the world around us, and positions the Christian foundation as an essential root for eradicating corruption and enabling world leaders to take a long-term view.

I shared my Christian perspective with JK, 'A lot of this is to do with concepts of the kingdom. So in your deepest sub-conscious and your soul [...] you've got this knowledge about the kingdom. There's a reality that you are aware of that is both here now, and then. For Christians, you are always drawing on that reality. You are in relationship with the possibility of its becoming'. I also mentioned the notion of common grace, as I commented that everybody is affected by spiritual influences, and that this is how God works with people to nudge them to greater awareness. I said, 'Beginning to ask these questions takes [people] a bit further down the road of recognition that there's more, and these [...] questions [...] do take people further in [...] from an evangelical point of view I think that asking questions about spirit at work helps to create a space where people can encounter God.' JK and I both felt that the time we were investing into our attempts to explore this area together was going to be a

service, ultimately, to potential clients who did not have the time themselves to make sense of how to apply SAW in practice.

#### 4.2.2 What is a spiritual mentor?

I first encountered the term spiritual mentoring in the book *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth – Sharing the Journey of Faith* by Horsfall (2008). Horsfall writes that ‘at its heart spiritual mentoring is simply a relationship between two people for the purpose of spiritual growth’ (Horsfall, 2008, p.11). Mentoring is clearly linked to spiritual direction by Anderson and Reese (1999). Mentoring is often linked with coaching, and both terms are accepted in the business world (Whitmore, 2002; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2012). Coaching in business is typically related to reaching specific objectives and performance goals, although it can have an ontological<sup>35</sup> foundation. For example, Sieler (2003) emphasises coaching as inquiry into what it means to be human. Milligan (2016), who argues for Christ-centred coaching, interprets the difference between coaching and mentoring as coaching being about ‘pull – asking and listening’ whereas mentoring is about ‘push – telling and advising’ (Milligan, 2016, p.9). A business mentor is normally knowledgeable in a particular area of expertise, and mentoring is constructed as a learning and development partnership between a professional with in-depth experience and knowledge of something, and a protégé, who can be older or younger than the mentor, seeking to learn. Farren (2006 [online]) describes the mentoring relationship as being the oldest form of professional learning and development.

I regard the concept of mentoring positively, but acknowledge care should be taken over who a person agrees to learn from. By using the word mentor to describe myself, I am indicating that I have the capacity, experience and knowledge to operate as a guide in my particular field, which is that of spiritual development. My focus on spiritual mentoring takes the concept of supporting another person’s learning to their spiritual foundations. I also prefer to use the term mentor over director, since, as Burke (2011 [online]) suggests, spiritual direction is typically offered by those who are ordained, whereas a spiritual mentor is more likely to be a lay person.

The boundaries around what constitutes spiritual mentoring are broad. Other terms such as soul friend (*Anam Cara*), soul companion, sacred companion, spiritual friend or spiritual guide can be used. The territory, however it is framed, is founded in spiritual direction and spiritual

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<sup>35</sup> Ontology, as described in chapter 2, is the study of being; an inquiry into the nature of human existence. Ontological coaching inquires into what it means to be a human being.

guidance. Spiritual direction has a long history in Christian tradition influenced by Anthony (251-356), Augustine (354-430), Celtic Christianity (early middle ages), Benedict (c.480-547), Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), John of the Cross (1542-1591), and numerous others, including twentieth century contributors, as summarised by Pickering (2008, p.5-7). Benner (2002) writes:

From distant places and times these wise Christians are able to reach across generations, cultures and denominational boundaries to offer soul nourishing guidance to those seeking accompaniment on the Christian spiritual journey. (Benner, 2002, p.31)

He advocates:

we should be careful not to neglect or despise them simply because they may seem unlike us [...] maybe associated with another branch of the Christian church. In reality they are fellow pilgrims. (Benner, 2002, p.31)

This helps me as an evangelical since the practice of spiritual direction is mainly associated with the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches (Howard, E, 2002 [online]). Horsfall (2008) explains that evangelicals can grow through the support of spiritual direction; each individual is unique and their story and journey are unique as well. Mentoring is promoting the work of God in the life of another and spiritual mentoring is a much needed and worthwhile ministry. In fact:

We need to see many, many individuals called by God and equipped by the Spirit entering into this ministry if the hunger for God is to be satisfied and the church is to be strong enough to face the challenges of an increasingly hostile world. (Horsfall, 2008, p.12)

It is of huge significance to me to find that the Vineyard Church in the UK has recently endorsed spiritual direction and expressed a desire to 'raise up spiritual directors' (Wright and Wright, 2016, section 9.30 to 10.15 [online]).

So what is spiritual mentoring or direction about? Anderson and Reese (1999) say:

Spiritual mentoring includes a process of listening to the life of another and then teaching people to open their eyes [...] to become detectives for the presence of divinity. (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.26)

Spiritual direction is defined as 'taking place when one person (the director) prayerfully supports and encourages another person (the directee) to attend and respond to God' (Pickering, 2008, p.3). Barry and Connolly (2009) describe it as:

help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating

God, to grow in intimacy with this God and to live out the consequences of the relationship.  
(Barry and Connolly, 2009, p.8)

The distinctiveness of spiritual direction, over coaching, counselling or therapeutic approaches, is that it involves an exploration of how a person is in relationship with God. Being a spiritual director therefore involves 'the process of developing a relationship with God, the process of helping another to relate consciously to God and to grow in that relationship' (Barry and Connolly, 2009, p.12).

Through spiritual mentoring, God uses ordinary people in relationship with one another to support spiritual growth. All Christians have the capacity to encourage and build one another up in their faith. Guenther (2008) describes herself as an amateur and suggests that her book, *Holy Listening*, is 'written for amateurs' (Guenther, 2008, p.1). However, it is also considered that some people are particularly gifted for this work. Gratton (1998 [online]) writes that:

According to some authorities, the aptitude for being a spiritual guide is a *charism*, an absolutely gratuitous gift made by the Holy Spirit to chosen persons. It is not a technique to be mastered, nor can it be institutionalized in courses and examinations.  
(Gratton, 1998, p.5 [online])

The word *charism* can refer to gifts that are seemingly natural, but is mainly associated with supernatural gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Such gifts are listed in several places in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4. Runcorn (2006) writes that such lists are:

not meant to be comprehensive and they are not ranked in order of importance [...] they are not to be ignored [...] they are vital equipment for Christian living.  
(Runcorn, 2006, p.139-140)

The word *charism* can mean spiritual graces granted to every Christian to use for the good of others and to build up the church<sup>36</sup>. Barry and Connolly (2009) concur that there is a recognisable distinction that sets people apart for this task:

There is no office or order of spiritual director in the church [...] Generally speaking effective spiritual directors are discovered by the Christian community; they do not put themselves forward without first having others seek their help.  
(Barry and Connolly, 2009, p.127)

In my case there has been a bit of both, I have put myself forward as I have become more aware of the significance of spiritual mentoring, but I have found that as I have done so people have been drawn to work with me.

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<sup>36</sup> The word is also used by Catholics to describe the special characteristics of their mission or values and the orientations of the order to which they belong.

I recognise my work as vocational in the sense that Magdalen (2008) writes:

The word [vocation] comes from the Latin *vocare* meaning “to call” [...] a calling by God to his service in special work [...]; a sphere of activity to which one has been called and for which one has a special fitness [...] Vocation therefore has to do with intentionality.  
(Magdalen, 2008, p.4)

She also recognises that whilst God chooses us to love and serve him, our task is to discover the particular form of service at different points in our life. We are drawn by God and:

might be drawn in a number of directions and test several paths, but we do so in response to the love we have for the One who calls.  
(Magdalen, 2008, p.8)

I see spiritual mentoring as a form of service that meets deep needs, and also that there is a gap in the life of the church that this form of ministry fills; I feel that I am being called towards meeting a real need.

Whilst I have made it clear to clients that I am a Christian, I have not emphasised any particular church or tradition with them. JK and I even talked about how ‘the skill of facilitating is not to shove your own answers into the mix, but to encourage and support people to develop their own sense of progression in their thinking.’ The client may be at any place in their faith journey; I am conscious that my evangelical perspective may not be one that is welcomed. This is something Benner (2002) emphasises:

The Christian spiritual journey requires us to overcome the temptation to follow other people rather than Jesus himself [...] An equally important temptation for those seeking to offer spiritual friendship is to assume that one’s own route is best for others [...] the task of spiritual friends is to help us to discern the presence, will and leading of the Spirit of God.  
(Benner, 2002, p.27)

So far, it has been sufficient for the client and I to be drawn together to explore the way God is at work in their life, and the questions which they have. The relationship of trust between us has been vital, and has enabled our ability to speak honestly. What I have brought to these conversations is the certainty that the spiritual journey is real, and significant, and worthy of exploration. From my own foundation of faith, I have been able to support clients who are in a different place from me. Through sharing, openness to learn and mutual discernment, I have been able to draw on a range of resources to offer guidance to help their spiritual journey. In this way I fulfill Horsfall’s (2008) description of spiritual mentors as people who ‘provide a safe place; they lend a listening ear; they offer wise counsel; and they give continuing support’ (Horsfall, 2008, p.37). Being a mentor requires qualities of character encompassing skills such

as listening, responding, questioning, wondering, and encouragement, but the role of mentor clearly goes beyond such skills.

As a mentor, I am conscious that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate guide. Pickering (2008) points out that:

the real “director” is God the Holy Spirit, who initiates and inspires the directee’s deepening relationship with the Trinity, with his or her own self, with other people and with the realities of life.  
(Pickering, 2008, p.27)

Being a mentor is a dynamic three-way relationship in which both mentor and mentoree are enabled to:

dive deeper into prayer and draw close to God in everyday life; discover God’s care in the midst of difficulties; become aware of the sacred within the ordinary events of life; honestly share with God their feelings, doubts and questions; become more like Christ and experience the fruits of the Spirit; move from a preoccupation with their sinfulness to a grace-full life of love and service.  
(Pickering, 2008, p.3-4)

Centrally, spiritual mentoring is about listening, both to a person and to the Holy Spirit. In order to be capable as a mentor I need to have a prayerful foundation, an orientation and intentionality around seeking intimacy with God. Leech (2001 [1977] p.84-85) suggests that good spiritual directors have the following characteristics: Holiness of life and closeness to God; experience stemming from their own struggles with the realities of prayer and life; that they are a person of learning; and of discernment, perception and insight; and that they give way to the Holy Spirit.

There are different models and approaches to spiritual direction. Guenther (2008) emphasises that spiritual direction can have many faces; she describes it as a ministry of hospitality, then also uses the metaphors of teacher (learning and teaching discernment) and midwife to describe the role of a spiritual director. Another core approach is that of Ignatian spirituality, stemming from the life of St Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatian spirituality explores how God’s personal love and activity is present in all things. It uses spiritual exercises, discernment using the method of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation, and the prayer of examen (see Loyola Press, 2013 [online] for descriptions) to explore how we can serve God in the world.

Anderson and Reese (1999) suggest five movements in the spiritual mentoring process which are useful guides to assess practice: attraction (the initial establishment of the mentoring relationship), relationship (the nurturing of an hospitable space of trust and intimacy),

responsiveness (the sustaining of a responsive spirit of teachability), accountability (growth through exercises of grace facilitated by the mentor) and empowerment (discovery of one's unique voice for kingdom service) (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.13). They also convey how spiritual mentoring can take varied forms:

relationships may be formal or informal, structured or unstructured, hierarchical or mutual, but they all have one primary function: they are processes of spiritual formation by which one person becomes a spiritual guide for one or several others. (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.36)

Ultimately, they recognise that, 'Mentoring does not come in a one-size-fits-all package. Mentors and mentoring are as unique as the individual relationship' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.36), involving a relational, autobiographical and purposive journey in partnership with the Holy Spirit. This gives me confidence that who I am becoming as a mentor, and what I am designing as an approach to spiritual formation, is legitimate.

I have intentionally taken a broad view of spiritual mentoring in the style that Anderson and Reese (1999) describe:

mentorship of the heart, a relationship with a teacher of life who is able to convey [...] a way of life that is formed, not merely instruction that is given. It requires a life shared by people who have learned that spiritual music is sung in its own way. (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.17)

In taking a broad view, I have accumulated an eclectic mix of approaches linked to my expansion of the HDM as framework for exploring life. Guenther's (2008) idea of hospitality as setting up a space for holy listening and storytelling has been important. She sees spiritual direction as 'always storytelling' (Guenther, 2008, p.31) and 'the director's task is to help connect the individual's story to **the** [sic] story and thereby help the directee to recognise and claim his identity in Christ' (Guenther, 2008, p.31). Anderson and Reese (1999, p.29) emphasize that the mentoree's story is the location for three primary themes to watch out for: Intimacy with God (who is God?); ultimate identity as a child of God (who am I?), and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility (what am I to do with my life?). These serve as good reminders of the purpose underlying the process, including the idea of empowerment which recognizes:

the empowering truth that God [is] already at work in our lives inviting us to greater intimacy as beloved children and empowering us to discover our own unique voices. (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.20)

Anderson and Reese helpfully join up mentoring with formation through their recognition that, 'Spiritual direction is a centuries old means of spiritual formation' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p. 24) and they convey that 'a relationship with a spiritual mentor is one of the best ways to

progress in the lifelong work of spiritual formation' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.27). Being drawn to work as a spiritual mentor has enabled me to expand my understanding of spiritual formation.

#### 4.2.3 What is spiritual formation?

What do I mean by spiritual formation? Historically, the term was used in connection with people who were training for ministry (Sheldrake, 2005). Contemporary spiritual formation is a multi-disciplinary subject and there are many definitions and practices associated with it.

May (1992) describes it as:

a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards a deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavours as well as the more intimate [...] process of spiritual direction. (May, 1992, p.6)

Tang (2015b [online]) provides a comprehensive literature review showing that it encompasses faith formation, spiritual transformation, Christian formation, discipleship, psychological growth, character and spiritual development. Transformation is key as Waaijman (2008)

writes:

Transformation is [...] part of lived spirituality. It points to moments of transition in the relational process of the divine-human relationship. In the Greek tradition they spoke of metamorphosis, in the Latin Church they developed the semantic field of: *forma, formatio, deformatio, conformitas, reformatio, transformatio* [...] Looking to the writings of John of the Cross, we note the spiritual manner by which the person moves between the *substantial union* by which God keeps human persons in being and the *union of love* by which human beings lose themselves in God. This movement is conceived in terms of form: malformation, reformation, conformity and transformation [...]. "Transformation" is used frequently by scholars [such as] Sandra Schneiders [1998, p.3, who] writes: "Spirituality as an academic discipline studies the transformative Christian experience". (Waaijman, 2008, p.63-64)

Willard (2002) recognises that the process of spiritual transformation in the inner life is not the result of human effort, but there is an element of choice in how we engage in the process.

The area of choice includes various spiritual disciplines or practices associated with spiritual formation (Foster, 1989) which draw on a rich heritage of Christian spirituality (Foster, 1998).

Calhoun (2005) clusters practices under umbrella headings such as: worship (which includes celebration, gratitude, Holy Communion, sabbath, rule for life); open myself to God (which includes contemplation, examen, journaling, practising the presence, rest, retreat, self-care, simplicity, slowing, teachability, unplugging); relinquish the false self (which includes confession and self-examination, detachment, discernment, silence, solitude, spiritual

direction); share myself with others (which includes accountability partner, chastity, community, covenant group, discipleship, hospitality, mentoring, service, small group, spiritual friendship, unity, witness); hear God's word (which includes Bible study, devotional reading, meditation, memorisation); incarnate the love of Christ (which includes care of the earth, compassion, control of the tongue, humility, truth telling, justice, stewardship); and pray (which includes various forms of prayer as well as fasting and praying scripture)<sup>37</sup>. Calhoun's clustering helps to focus on the ends the practices seek to accomplish, and his comprehensive guide to spiritual disciplines demonstrates that whilst spiritual formation is personal it is not individualistic. Rather, spiritual formation is a holistic concept, because it is something that is shaped in a community (church). Houston (2002) similarly recognises this, as part of his affirmation of the use of spiritual mentoring. Thus spiritual formation encompasses a broad range of disciplines and practices which have an end in mind, and can be assisted through purposeful sharing with a trusted person. The end aim, and the purpose of spiritual formation, is that a person is being transformed into the image of Christ.

Whilst the tools of formation can be portrayed in a neat list of methods and processes, these leave something vital out. That something is the workability and application of approaches in people's lives; sustaining the spiritual journey can be difficult and not as easy as it has been conveyed. For evangelicals the transformational journey, which arguably begins with conversion, has tended to emphasise personal devotion through the pursuit of habits such as daily reading of the Bible (perhaps following a formal plan), prayer and occasional fasting alongside worship, praise and various forms of ministry. Yet, Gillett (1993) identifies that pursuing a personal, individual, and spontaneous spiritual life carries some danger:

the individual, with his or her particular interests, always sets the agenda for prayer, which can give a certain self-centredness to the exercise [...] the lack of structure can leave one bereft when faced with a period of spiritual dryness, over-work, or tiredness [...] at such times prayer can disappear altogether.  
(Gillett, 1993, p.35)

By using the HDM in my mentoring practice, I provide a holistic overview which can help to shed light on blind spots, and can equip a person to become conscious of how they are approaching spiritual development and what use may be made of appropriate spiritual practices and disciplines.

The diversity of choice in the area of spiritual formation makes it rather a complicated territory for investigation. The different Christian traditions which have shaped spiritual formation

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<sup>37</sup> My explanation does not include all the aspects described by Calhoun.

reveal the Bible has been interpreted in different ways at different times. Those who have participated actively with the Holy Spirit have been led and shaped in accordance with their own tradition, culture and context. That work continues today as the Holy Spirit works in new ways with people who inhabit contemporary culture and who may have their own issues, as well as current world problems, to deal with; the Holy Spirit can create new forms and expressions of church, even as we attempt to keep alive and understand traditional forms. Our understanding of our Christian identity can change in the process. This is a point that Paul (2016, citing Kuhrt, 2011 [online]) makes:

Raised as an evangelical, he [Kuhrt] was nurtured in the things in the “conservative” column as being true markers of Christian faith. But out of a personal commitment to help others, he trained in social work and discovered the things in the “liberal” column—and that they did not fit very well with his upbringing in the “conservative” column.

	<u>Liberal emphasis</u>	<u>Conservative emphasis</u>
Theological focus	Social	Personal
Focus of God’s concern	Corporate	Individual
Humanity’s predicament	Social injustice	Personal sin
Means of salvation	Incarnation	Atonement
Favourite scripture	Synoptic gospels	Pauline epistles
Hermeneutic	Experience	Revelation
Eschatological perspective	The present ‘now’	The eternal ‘not yet’
How transformation happens	Journey of faith	Conversion
Focus of discipleship	The kingdom of God	Relationship with God
Required lifestyle	Right action	Right belief
Approach to evangelism	Presence	Proclamation
Ethical perspective	Social justice	Personal morality
Locus of responsibility	Society	Individuals, families
Perspective to others	Tolerance	Distinctiveness

(Paul, 2016, p.10)

Paul recognises that ‘true Christian radicalism involves holding these two sides of this chart together’ (Paul, 2016, p.10-11) and has shown something of the complexity around how to support Christian action in the world.

It is important that belief does result in action. Tang (2015b [online]) recognises how, ‘Spiritual formation embraces the intellect but moves beyond belief into action’ (Tang, 2015b, p.6 [online]); and cites the work of Johnson (1989) to emphasise that Christian spiritual formation is about learning how to live as a Christian, including how to actualise our Christian

vocation over the course of a lifetime. In considering activism, Bosch (1983) explained evangelism, mission and spirituality within a wider understanding of salvation as being about embracing a new order in this present life. This new order is characterised by love, freedom, justice and peace. Song's (2014 [online]) writing about the spirituality of Bosch identifies that extremes of Christian living include escapism (being so future kingdom oriented that we are not of the world and do nothing to support change within it); and activism (focusing on social action to such an extent that we take matters into our own hands, and lose sight of the reality of sin, and our need for God, repentance, and conversion). Packer (1961) highlighted similar concerns. What is lost in these two extremes is a holistic message. By using the HDM I have been paying attention to these dimensions through the tension between being and doing.

It seems that for evangelical spirituality, seeking God is not the sole focus; the church also has a part to play in the transformation of society. With this in mind, I understand the term evangelical to be about more than preaching the gospel, making converts and expanding the church. The gospel message is about more than personal salvation, it is about recognising the sovereignty of God over all of life, and acknowledging that 'spirituality is not something that can be isolated from the rest of our existence' (Song, 2014, p.7 [online]). This understanding shows the creative tension that Christians live with; the kingdom of God is both now and not yet, both reality and an ideal. Living under the reign of God means that mission is to do with asking what God is doing in a world characterised by injustice, corruption, fatalism and all sorts of ungodliness and how we, as Christians, can be involved in God's work, whilst recognising that the reign of God will not be fully achieved until the second coming of Jesus Christ. For Bosch (Song, 2014 [online]) the:

reign of God [...] expresses itself in the way we view other fellow human beings and in the manner we reach out to them, that is in our evangelism and social concerns.  
(Song, 2014, p.7 [online])

Evangelical spirituality addresses the tension between understanding oneself (self-identity in relation to God), and supporting service to others. There is a sacrificial element in obeying God as well as a social element in serving others. These various tensions are at work in the area of spiritual formation, and JK's story provides an example of that.

Exploring the area of spiritual formation has led me to access a range of Christian traditions and various spiritual practices. My SLJ process has incorporated journaling, visualisation, prayer walks, retreats, prayer, and music, in combination with exercises that support personal, spiritual and leadership development. But there is no right blend of these and working to

understand so many methods can complicate things unnecessarily. Even Richard Foster (2007), whose name is deeply associated with spiritual formation, has warned of the danger of thinking of spiritual formation entirely as a set of practices, re-emphasising that they are only helpful if they enable us to 'walk with the living Christ' (Foster, 2007, p.23). Despite my, perhaps complicated, way of working with the HDM, JK affirmed the process I was using and remarked, in session three, that, 'where we've got to now [...] is exciting and valuable, and lots more exciting and valuable than anything I ever talked about at [his old consultancy firm].' JK really liked the HDM and in session four said 'why not just stick with the map of meaning [...] there is much more in the map of meaning as the prime tool [...] than we are allowing there to be.' However, later JK acknowledged that some of my additional resources 'turned out for me to be quite useful'.

The purpose of spiritual formation is to grow in our relationship with God so that it becomes one of intimacy, whereby we feel safe increasingly opening ourselves up to God's transformative Spirit. Spiritual disciplines are only useful if they can genuinely help with that. Willard (2002), defined spiritual formation as a:

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.  
(Willard, 2002, p.22)

This reminds me of the simple truth at the heart of spiritual formation; that Jesus Christ is alive and interceding for us: 'Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us' (Romans 8.34). Jesus is our main guide, and it is not our efforts to be spiritual that transforms us; it is God's will for us to be transformed. It is possible that the various ideas, generalisations, intellectual wranglings, and meanderings that we can take, might cloud that reality from our sight. As an evangelical, I believe I need to keep focusing on Jesus, 'looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12.2), and interacting with scripture, which is dynamic and powerful:

the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  
(Hebrews 4.12)

By doing these things, I believe I move closer towards understanding God's will, and can discern what is true spiritually for me and for others.

### **4.3 Spiritual mentoring and formation in practice**

The SLJ process was helpful for JK as he wanted to talk about his faith. It enabled him to have space for reflection, conversation and discovery. I provided him with both support and challenge about his spiritual journey. Over the course of two years JK was able to explore and see things differently and to take new actions as a result. Anderson and Reese (1999) convey that 'the mentoree brings raw materials to the mentoring relationship – questions, issues, struggles, ideas, hopes, dreams, information, misinformation – the basic stuff of life' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.55), and that 'it is the task of the mentor to help us sink deep enough into our lives [to discover what God has in mind for us]' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.48). Some key concerns that came up for JK included: the role of church communities, living faith, personal purpose and mission discerned through use of scripture, calling to adventure as leadership, and difficulty and sacrifice. This section shows how these areas arose and what was learned, both for me as mentor, and for JK as mentoree. It illuminates that there is movement between faith and leadership concerns, but it is complex. It involves looking closely at what faith means to an individual which is not a simple or linear process, it is in fact rather messy. Runcorn (2006) indicates, 'Human becoming is never a tidy process. We can get stuck, take long detours, get lost or give up' (Runcorn, 2006, p.69). The point of examining faith in this way is to find out how a person changes as a result of their Christian calling, and how their faith might influence their work context as a result.

#### *4.3.1 JK 1: Considering church*

##### *4.3.1.1 Mentor*

By calling myself a spiritual mentor I have made visible the need to pay attention to the spiritual life, and presented myself as a guide who offers companionship for spiritual reflection. It is significant for me that no formal authority is required as I do not have a formal church office, and by attending churches which do not ordain women, ordination has not been an option (although I appreciate that other women do have a sense of calling around ordination). Yet having confidence to declare my identity in public also requires some means of accountability. This opens up new possibilities of exploration for me.

Anderson and Reese (1999) position mentoring in a wider faith context, 'While some may be especially gifted for mentoring, spiritual mentoring is the work of the community of faith' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p. 56). Barry and Connolly (2009) agree that the Christian community is a vital part of the accountability and formational context:

The more conscious directors are of the life of the Christian community and the more knowledgeable they are about the experienced relationship of that community with God and with all reality, the more helpful they are likely to be to directees. But their authority arises basically from the fact that they share in the faith-life of the Christian community as it experiences its dialogue with God.  
(Barry and Connolly, 2009, p.128)

Being rooted in a church environment has been an important foundation for me. Gratton (1998 [online]) recognises that:

those of us who claim to be Christian guides have a responsibility to [...] clarify what we are offering to people who come to us for guidance both within and outside our own tradition. In our time of [...] “broken and abandoned inheritance”, (there is a need for) those offering spiritual guidance themselves to stand firmly in one tradition.  
(Gratton, 1998, p.2 [online])

I have developed my understanding of myself within the evangelical tradition. However, understanding what church is, given its various manifestations, can be problematic.

The word church in the New Testament has been translated from the Greek *ekklesia*. Abrams (2016) argues that *ekklesia* really means ‘called out assembly’ (Abrams, 2016, paragraph 9) or congregation of believers. Ditzels (2011, p.2 [online]) emphasises the *ekklesia* that Jesus built is composed of all believers. Ephesians 5.23 shows that ‘Christ is the head of the church, his body’, referring to the called out ones, and in Matthew 16.18 Jesus says ‘I will build my church’. Thus the *ekklesia* built by Jesus Christ and found throughout the New Testament is the body of Christian believers who have been called out of darkness into light (I Peter 2.9). Ditzels (2011 [online]) explains how the English word church comes from a completely different Greek word *Kuriakos* which refers to a building set apart as sacred and, thus, considered to be the Lord's. Therefore church is associated in most people's minds with buildings, public worship, institutionalized religion, and the clergy of that institutionalized religion. I believe the term church should not simply be thought of in terms of a building or a series of worship services. The church is the body of Christ, and every member of the church is part of that body.

Webster (2000) records how Barth's theology was concerned with the church:

the sheer actuality of God's act of revelation [requires] the theologian to follow its [...] spiritually given [...] presence and movement. The direction of that movement, Barth came to see, is towards the church, appointed by God as the sphere in which revelation meets the recognition of faith.  
(Webster, 2000, p.171)

Barth recognised that theology takes place in the life of the Christian community, as that is the place where speech about God and God's word takes place. His great work *Church Dogmatics*

measured such speech against the given revelation of God (Webster, 2000, p.41). Depth of understanding comes from within the church when it focuses on knowing the Trinitarian God, a God of love and freedom, interpreted through 'relationship and fellowship created and sustained in Jesus Christ (CD II/1, p. 320)' (Webster, 2000, p.86). The church provides a critical context for spiritual formation; the purpose of church structure can be seen in relation to spiritual formation in Ephesians 4.11-16. Gifts and roles are mentioned, these are in place to:

equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.  
(Ephesians 4.12-13)

The emphasis is on unity and maturing into the fullness of Christ. Slipper (2016), expanding on John 17, speaks of unity as being the real mission of God through the church, 'The knowledge of God is played out by participating, as a community at one, in the life of God' (Slipper, 2016, p.7), and:

sharing in God's Trinitarian life, which is what Jesus' prayer (and the Bible elsewhere) shows us unity is, is a good in itself<sup>38</sup>. Indeed, it is *the* good of human existence. If anything, therefore, unity is the very purpose of mission.  
(Slipper, 2016, p.11-12)

I operate with the understanding of the church as the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12.12-27, supported by Ephesians 4.1-6) and see that the work of discipleship is embedded in the wider community of faith. From this orientation I can explore with mentorees their perception of church, how they fit into the body of Christ, how they share fellowship and the journey of faith with others. I recognize spiritual mentoring as being a supportive mechanism within this milieu, 'spiritual formation is nurtured most profoundly when disciples are *apprenticed* to a spiritual mentor who will partner with God's Holy Spirit toward spiritual development' (Anderson and Reese 1999, p.27, emphasis mine). Watson (1988 [1981]) explains that the word apprentice is a translation of the Greek word *mathetes* or disciple (Watson, 1988 [1981], p.19).

Since I encourage mentorees to value their involvement in a community of faith it has been important to sustain my own church involvement. I have therefore chosen to step more firmly into the body of Christ, not simply through my commitment to attend weekly services, but through volunteering to serve in various ways, and through engaging in a variety of small

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<sup>38</sup> This is Slipper's footnote: The sense of communion in the divine life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit underpins the fourth gospel. It is especially clear in the farewell discourse, for instance in chapter 15's imagery of the vine and the branches (John 13.31-17.26).

group and leadership activities. As a small group leader I am accountable to my local church, I am supported by an overseer of small group leaders, and involved in activities that are designed to support leaders. I maintain an active involvement in the life of the church, building relationships, encouraging others and being encouraged through prayer ministry. These approaches help to ensure that I am aligned with the work of the Holy Spirit and not my own leanings. The church context also provides me with an understanding of how communities flourish through creation of right relationships (Wright, 2000; Schluter & Lee, 2009).

I have taken my authority from being an evangelical, baptised believer, part of the body of Christ, but now recognise this may be insufficient if I am to continue to operate as a spiritual mentor. Long (2006) highlights that supervision is encouraged as an aid to good practice; that it is helpful for spiritual directors themselves to have their own spiritual director in order to sustain a 'truer interior freedom' (Long, 2006, p.7), and to sift their own interior experience, as they stand alongside others. I have sought out spiritual directors, prayer partners, and soul friends who have each been helpful during particular stages of my work and life. Recently I began formal training as a spiritual director<sup>39</sup>, and through the course have been introduced to a new spiritual director who I am now meeting with.

#### *4.3.1.2 Mentoree*

For JK faith and church were combined and had been present in his life since childhood, 'I'm not sure that my faith has changed my life. I always had a sort of latent, inactive faith. I went to church every week and was bored. But when I got to 16 and I had the choice I still went. At university, and after my mother died, I still went.' Later, his experience with church became difficult when attending as a family, 'the priest said "I don't like them (JK's children) making a noise in church" so we stopped. Then we [tried] again [...] they had Sunday school. But said it was "boring", "a waste of our time", and the service wasn't really suitable for them so we stopped then as well.' Paradoxically, JK was later drawn back to church through his children who became Christians themselves. 'After school [JK's daughter] started going out with the son of the pastor of the church we now go to – that's how we got involved in that church. It's very different from any other church I'd seen [free prayer, happy clappy songs etc] but I do miss the ritual of the C of E.'

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<sup>39</sup> In 2016 I was accepted onto a two-year course, run by St. Albans diocese, offering training in spiritual direction

Boyce-Tillman (2007) focuses on how church can be experienced as exclusive by marginalised groups, 'the traditional structures of the church have not always been good at inclusivity' (Boyce-Tillman, 2007, p.177). She draws on Donovan (1982) to declare 'it is often not Christianity that has been preached but the Church which is a distortion of Christ's message' (Boyce-Tillman, 2007, p.177). Boyce-Tillman also considers the work of Boff (1990) who refers to:

"new ways of being church" and argued for the church as an "event (which) emerges, is born, and is continuously reshaped [...] The principal characteristic of this way of being Church is community" (Boff, 1990, p.127-30). This parallels Tillich (1964) who declares that the church is "simply and primarily a group of people who express a new reality by which they have been grasped" (Tillich, 1964, p.40-41). (Boyce-Tillman, 2007, p.178)

The struggle of the church towards being a genuine community, even though it does not always succeed, is part of the climate of working out what faith is and how it is practiced by those who inhabit the life of the church.

Deep yearnings for spiritually authentic, culturally attuned and attractive expressions of church are a hopeful feature of contemporary church life. This may mean planting churches that are not clones. It may mean transforming inherited modes of church. In fragmented, individualistic post modernity, many long for authentic community and friendship. But churches are not always at their best. They can be superficial, vicious, patronising, dysfunctional and parochial. Mission, community and worship – three crucial components of church – are inspiring and energising emerging churches (Murray, 2004, p.253-55). (Boyce-Tillman, 2007, p.178-179)

Murray (2004) highlighted three aspects of faith expressed through the church as: the need to glorify God (the sense of looking up through worship); the capacity for unity (looking inward personally and with one another to understand church as community), and influence on non-believers (looking to raise awareness of God, construed as mission). These dimensions reflect and demonstrate a dynamic flow which also impact individual spiritual formation. Leech (1988) in his examination of *True Prayer* recognises that:

The quest for union with God and the quest for the unity of mankind is one quest. Prayer needs always to be seen within this social context [...] God is not private but personal and social, Being in relationship. [...] in God there is social life, community, sharing. To share in God is to share in that life. (Leech, 1988, p.8)

JK's frustration with church was evident. He was confused and ambivalent about its value. I suggested he experienced church as 'a passive person' and that church felt like something that was 'done to you', to which JK replied 'yes it is'. JK admitted that he was 'having difficulty getting back into church' and had been going to different churches than his local one. He was

slightly defensive, 'it's not that we haven't got God in our life because we don't go to church [...] I don't quite know what is wrong with the local church' which led to the confession 'I don't really know where we are.' JK didn't feel he was evangelical, as evangelicals think they have 'got it right', and said 'I know God will work with different people in different ways.' He did not have a clear view of himself as a disciple, upholding the life of the church in terms of each member being a part of the body of Christ. Despite his frustrations, JK did acknowledge that the church community gave him strength and support. In addressing the question of whether you can really be a good leader without faith he reflected on whether 'the secular humanist approach will get you as far as anything else? My own experience is that it doesn't because, you run out of battery. You don't have (I've done my church down a bit) you don't have a community of Christians – you don't actually have the very powerful support of a Christian network. By their very existence they are supporting. I don't think there's a humanist network which is the same.' He felt that Christians were able to get to 'the heart of the matter' which was not true of people generally in organizations. In my guidance, I recognise that I was encouraging JK to reflect on his life of faith in relation to the church because he had become critical of it.

Bonhoeffer (1978 [1939]) wrote clearly about the importance of the church as a community. He defined the church as a meeting ground of those called by Christ. He concluded that we are to live as the body of the church, using our gifts to support it and work through it to reach out to those who have not yet made a commitment to Christ. Bonhoeffer recognized there was a gap between the reality of what the church should look like, and what it actually was. But emphasized that Christians should not take the church for granted, but work with Christ to enable the church to be a community of love. Christians must take care not to be overly critical of the church, as becoming a Christian means that a person simultaneously becomes a part of Christ's body - the church, so in effect we are criticising ourselves and our own failings. How the church is experienced is partly down to each believer and their responsiveness to God as he works in them, through them and around them in the lives of others. Wilson (2012 [online]) supports this view:

I have met countless numbers of people who have been turned away from Christianity because of their experience with Christians [...] In reality however, ALL my actions and words will either reflect or reject my faith and it could be the seemingly insignificant things I do and say that make a difference in someone's life.  
(Wilson, 2012, paragraphs 4 and 12 [online])

Because of the significance of the body of Christ, I wanted JK to consider more deeply how his conversion to Christianity was also movement towards discipleship within the body of Christ,

involving a continuous choice to turn towards Christ repeatedly. But my concern was also to understand JK's commitment to live a life of faith, since if JK had restricted involvement in church then how was his faith being demonstrated? James 2.17 suggests 'faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead'. It became clearer that the call of Christ for JK was not just about the church, but rather to live out faith in everyday life and work.

JK's faith life did not appear as a sudden revelation or conversion, but came by JK gradually accepting that he should surrender to God. He attributed his spiritual growth partially to his involvement in church, but also felt it stemmed from other means, 'My experiences have been [...] like you are going along [...] and somewhere there's an arbitrary line and if you go along [it] you are not in. But when you get to this point you go past the line and that's how it was when I became a Christian again – it's because I crossed that line. And the feeling that was right [...] that's the only way I can put it [...] than the feeling that it wasn't. So in a sense it is like saying "yes I see that I should surrender to God", but there wasn't anything that made that happen. It's like Chinese water torture – just dripping in, drip, drip, drip and eventually it soaks.' He recognised that he had 'become a Christian' and mentioned that he had been baptised. But he hadn't 'talked about this for a long time' and felt that growth had come largely from reading and appreciation of art and literature which had been ongoing throughout his transition to a more explicit faith. 'I don't know whether having a spiritual life gives you depth of contemplation, or whether having had an interest in these things [literature, art] helped me to latch into a spiritual life when the circumstances came up. I don't know which would be the cause and which would be the effect?' Agnew (2008) writes of the importance of reading as a contribution to life formation (p.187) and shows that reading provides access to values which 'can become an antidote to the toxic nature of society' (Agnew, 2008, p.196). JK had maintained his interest in art, history and literature as part of his spiritual journey and reflected theologically on what he encountered in these mediums. He had found time since leaving his consultancy role to read, learn and travel. 'In Italy, I found I was coming increasingly uncomfortable in the Catholic Churches with the combination of knee bending and lots of pictures of Mary – where were the pictures of Jesus? Then last week we went to the British Museum to hear the director talking about relics. It made me realise there is a hole in my religious thinking. I went to church for 20 years and never studied the Bible. They preached from the text but you never studied the Bible. And now, in our church, it spends too long studying the Bible – you take a sentence and study it three ways up and then you are still

wondering what it means when you're finished. There's a lot of over-rationalising of the Bible.'

Through JK's questioning of how churches 'genuinely support Christianity' I think he was speaking out for spirituality, and railing against rationalism, in the way that Sheldrake (1998) depicts:

Christianity has become a religion of too many words [...] the Christian treasure house contains a rich array of resources [but] sadly this has often been forgotten in an over-emphasis on theology and preaching on definition and rationality.  
(Sheldrake, 1998, p.201)

JK seemed to be prioritising an experience of God over obedience to God. He was looking for something exciting, 'I wonder where [...] are the Christian mystics? The real exciting spiritual people? Where've they all gone? Where's the spiritual excitement? I suppose that's what I mean. I don't sense the presence of God in church.' JK was looking for excitement that he had once felt through church, 'The one thing I miss, and I don't know where to go for it, is the feeling of excitement'. He had spiritual experiences in evensong services where the music had helped him to find 'some real connection with God that's more spiritual than anything else I've come across. If I'm searching, that's what I am searching for.'

Boyce-Tillman (2007) shows, in her model, that there are different polarities when it comes to knowing, and one of those is a polarity of excitement and relaxation. She recognises that 'the worshipping Church, can [be] repetitive and dull' (Boyce-Tillman, 2007, p.159) and yet also paradoxically points out how:

the Wisdom tradition is often much more "boring"; for it concerns the painstaking, often mundane task of incarnating Christ in the everyday fabric of ordinary lives in the minutiae of decisions we take all the time often on automatic pilot than by conscious choice.  
(Boyce-Tillman, 2007, p.158-159)

I wondered if JK's desire for excitement might be a symptom of him pulling away from difficulty and the depth of commitment needed to grasp the task of incarnating Christ. Alternatively, it might be that he was expressing his longing for more of God. Boredom was something JK was conscious of; he mentioned in session four that he had become bored in his former consultancy and that 'there was no adventure in my life in [his company] anymore'. By seeking excitement and personal experience of God, JK was showing he was hungry for God, but through his frustration with church he was showing that he was wrestling with how faith should be expressed, and that faith is not easy or straightforward.

Through his positive regard towards Christian mystics I think JK was expressing a longing for a more lively relationship with God. Mysticism is not a core aspect of evangelical spirituality so provides a new avenue of exploration for me, but I interpret it as an indication of someone who has taken their spiritual life seriously. King (2001) defines a mystic as ‘a person who is deeply aware of the powerful presence of the divine spirit’ (King, 2001, p.3) and later suggests that ‘the mystical life represents the full flowering of Christian baptism’ (King, 2001, p.19). Colossians 2.2 describes the ‘riches of full assurance of understanding and knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ’. When mysticism is a term used for a way of life that is focused on a continuing path of sanctification through a relationship with Jesus it does not seem problematic. Other definitions seem similarly sanguine, for example, Sheldrake (1998):

Mysticism [is] fundamentally the life of every baptized Christian who [comes] to know God revealed in Jesus Christ through belonging to the “fellowship of the mystery”, that is, the church.  
(Sheldrake, 1998, p.37)

And Perrin (2007) says:

Christian mysticism is part of the potential reality of everyday life [...] the foundation of Christian mysticism is the ongoing intimate presence of God active in the everyday life of the Christian.  
(Perrin, 2007, p.239)

He explains:

The mystery of God’s love that is spoken of in the New Testament is not something mysterious in the sense that it is hidden, but mysterious in the sense that it remains obscure, even in its revelation in Jesus Christ [...] At the core of Christian mysticism lies the awareness that there is only one *mysterium*: God. The remote God is experienced as near in a mysterious way. The nearness opens up that kind of experience that Christianity refers to as mysticism.  
(Perrin, 2007, p.241)

However, mysticism can be contested as being subjective and unbiblical and as Hilbert (2016 [online]) writes, ‘Christian mysticism does not rely on the Scriptures for its truth and spirituality, but rather upon one’s own feelings, impressions, and intuitions’ (Hilbert, 2016, Section B, 3.C [online]). Benner (2002) recognises that:

Protestants are often suspicious of mysticism. Sometimes associating it with magic or occultism, they may assume that Christian mysticism is an oxymoron. This is a serious misunderstanding. The Christian mystics offer tremendously rich resources for those seeking to deepen their life of prayer and intimacy with God. That help is both most needed and yet most often resisted by those predisposed by background or personality to be overly intellectual in their life and faith.  
(Benner, 2002, p.30)

The examination of the Christian mystics draws us into the mystery of God, which Benner concludes is a positive part of a genuine Christian spiritual journey:

Mystery will always be enigmatic. But it need not be feared. A spiritual journey that seeks to eliminate all that is mysterious will never take us far enough from our comfort zone for genuine transformation.  
(Benner, 2002, p.31)

Despite positive endorsements, mysticism is set within a broad frame of reference and, because its spiritual validity has been contested, it warrants further critical investigation. Unfortunately, space prohibits me from such exploration here.

JK's inquiry shows that he was perplexed about many facets within the life of faith. Sheldrake (1998) identifies a paradox that JK's frustration seemed to resonate with:

True theologians are those who *experience* the content of their theology. On the other hand, mystical experiences, while personal, are nevertheless the working out in an individual of a faith that is common to all.  
(Sheldrake, 1998, p.38)

JK's journey of faith needed to be examined in more depth in order to discern what was important for him to pay attention to in his ongoing walk with God, and to understand more about just how faith works in practice.

#### 4.3.2 JK 2: Examining faith

##### 4.3.2.1 Mentor

I saw that JK was 'thinking about [his] faith, applying [his] faith', and was 'attempting to live [his] faith.' In session three of the SLJ I had prayed at the beginning and invited God's presence to help us 'engage at a deeper level'. It was in light of this that we then discussed various spiritual practices in the context of how JK could express his full potential. I considered how JK's post-conversion journey was about 'on-going awareness' and suggested that he needed to 'cultivate [his] spiritual life' in order to help him become more aware of the reality and presence of God. I helped JK to recognise that the SLJ process was part of 'a spiritual self-awareness' examination and that the HDM allows a space where 'the work of the Spirit can be stirred up'. He particularly valued the tensions that the model brought out, such as the one between inspiration and reality, and said 'for me, part of my tension is – does my religion really drive me? Am I following that inspiration sufficiently?' JK saw that he was 'still a secular person. I was in the secular world for 40 years. It's a foundation you don't knock down even if you do say you've been reborn [...] so that's what I am struggling to come to terms with.' He

wanted to understand more about ‘the transformative power of having God in you [...] that’s a really strong thing.’

E Howard (2002) writes about *Three Temptations of Spiritual Formation* by which he means the focus can drift and become not Christian, not spiritual and not formational. He emphasises that ‘spiritual formation develops primarily in the context of a relationship with Christ’ (Howard, E, 2002, p.2 [online]); unlike other religious traditions Christian spiritual formation is the process by which believers become more fully conformed and united to Christ - *Christian* spiritual formation. It is about the transformation of our spirit; spiritual formation involves the intentional pursuit of God, inspired by the leading of the Spirit, informed by the speaking of the Spirit, and empowered by the work of the Spirit - *Christian spiritual* formation. And it is about transforming character:

conforming all of life (thought, feeling, word and deed) to the life of Christ [...] conformity with Christ comes ultimately only through a lifetime of obedience and the grace of the Spirit.  
(Howard, E, 2002, p.4 [online])

That is - *Christian spiritual formation*. What he also recognises is that this can be ‘hard work at times – not works righteousness but hard work nonetheless’ (Howard, E, 2002, p.3 [online]). I wanted to support JK towards genuine Christian spiritual formation; I wanted him to be led by the Holy Spirit, to deepen his relationship with Jesus, and to explore what obedience in all of life meant for him.

Webster (2000) recognises how:

the reader of the gospel faces a demand for faith [which is] an objective grasp of the situation in which the reader has been placed as one who is addressed by God.  
(Webster, 2000, p.32)

He also says, ‘Faith is that which is worked out in the reader by God’ (Webster, 2000, p.33). I asked JK, what ‘pearls of wisdom anchor you, and give you a corner stone and foundation. What are the things that actually you do operate on that are spiritual? [...] When has God been tapping you on the shoulder, lighting you up from the inside; when has God really walked with you and you have felt his presence?’ JK answered that it was only in this recent period that he had paid any attention to that kind of question. I provoked JK to consider ‘there is so much more that God is wanting us to be than when we first set out and that we have any appreciation of. If we are good at [...] spiritual practices and being in close fellowship with God, those things [spiritual development] will come about for us without even trying. But if you try to develop on your own, you’ll miss out, ‘cos you aren’t really being led, you are not

really following the call on your life.’ In session four I continued to cajole JK, ‘I don’t want to labour the point but I think spiritual practices are a continuing permanent feature of the landscape of the spiritual life and God will bless your persistence in attempting to meet him in a less crowded space’. JK finally responded, ‘Yes that’s the conclusion that’s being forced on me (SH laughs) [...] not by you I mean but by reflections that are happening between – as I go about my daily life’. Yet, he agreed to increase his moments for contemplation, ‘I think the walk is a good idea, the psalms are a good idea and the dialogues have been a good idea.’ I noticed that my evangelical mindset was influencing how I judged JK’s spiritual progress, and I was operating from a concern that JK would not be able to deepen his spiritual life without more disciplined engagement.

In emphasising spiritual practices, I recognise prayer as being of primary importance since its purpose is to bring us into a ‘life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son’ (Foster, 1992, p.59). However, Foster (1992) warns ‘none of us will keep up a life of prayer unless we are prepared to change’ (Foster, 1992, p.59), and the change, which God creates in us, is from the inside out. Foster (p.60) describes this change as constant conversion, the sense of conversion as being a continuous and constant movement of the Spirit, taking us away from the status quo and how things have always been. Foster provides insight into our struggle with prayer. He acknowledges that we can hide from prayer but what we really need to do is just simply begin to pray. He portrays the mysterious nature of what happens over time as we keep praying:

In God’s time and in God’s way [...] slowly, almost imperceptibly [...] we pass from thinking of God as part of our life to the realization that we are part of his life. [...] A conversion of the heart takes place, a transformation of the spirit.  
(Foster, 1992, p.16)

Prayer is something Christians need to work at, but ‘we should never be discouraged by our lack of prayer’ since ‘even in our prayerlessness we can hunger for God [...] the hunger itself is prayer’ (Foster, 1992, p.14). I am fully aware that the Christian life is not easy, and even the role of prayer in the life of a Christian, an essential route to knowing God, can be difficult.

Foster (1992) writes that prayer takes us inward, upward and outwards. This is similar to the emphasis given by Murray (2004) about church as community (inward), worship (upward) and mission (outward). Thus prayer should not be isolated from other aspects of Christian devotion which make up an overall spiritual life. Foster outlines Dallas Willard’s view of the spiritual life as containing:

three major areas God uses in our continuing transformation – a “golden triangle” of formation [...] The first area is the classical disciplines of the spiritual life: solitude, fasting, worship, celebration [...] The second area is our continual interaction with the movings of the Spirit of God: resistance, disobedience, repentance, submission, faith, obedience and more. The third major area is the patient endurance God develops in us by means of the various frustrations, trials and temptations we face daily. (Foster, 1992, p.60)

The spiritual life of faith is presented as a combination of factors.

Examining the specifics of a person’s life of faith is vital. Powell (2005) writes that:

there is no such thing as faith in general. [...] the act of faith is the act of a person occupying a particular historical place and time. It is the response of our entire being to God’s call to us in the gospel. [This means that] it cannot be separated from the sum total of our desires, our hopes and fears, our beliefs, and the other aspects of our lives, all of which are particular and perhaps unique, being the product of our life histories. (Powell, 2005, p.74)

Sheldrake (1998) recognises that belief and practice are both part of Christian spirituality and contribute to shaping the world. He laments that the church can be part of the problem when it comes to supporting the spiritual renewal of society, ‘Sadly the churches have often done remarkably little to provide adequate [...] theological education for adult members to link this to spiritual formation’ (Sheldrake, 1998, p.200). Powell (2005) writes:

In spite of considerable effort over the centuries, theologians and church leaders have never been completely successful in conveying the notion that Christian faith is not simply a matter of belief [...] to be sure, Christian faith involves the act of belief [...] Nonetheless [the] Christian faith is *more than* intellectual belief [...] it has everything to do with the practice of life. (Powell, 2005, p.77)

He describes a difference between the content (or object) of faith and the subjective act of faith. Even the object of faith, the kingdom of God and the new creation, involves an ethical dimension as it presents ‘a new reality, a new way of existing both individually and corporately’ (Powell, 2005, p.71). This new reality ‘engages the totality of our embodied being’ (Powell, 2005, p.71). In my capacity as spiritual mentor, as I explored with JK how his faith was in evidence and having an effect in his life, I sense I was filling a gap in the life of the church that really matters.

Whilst it appears that my research has broadened by focusing more on spiritual formation in the whole of life than on work or leadership, I retained a focus on considering the impact of the spiritual life on JK’s professional roles, and in particular exploring his potential leadership capacity. Our journey was meandering, and non-linear, but there was a consistent turning

towards reflection on these elements. Concepts of human development and faith development overlap. For example both can be seen as happening in progressive stages. Spiritual growth is thought to take place in stages as Fowler (1981), and Hagberg and Guelich (1989) have outlined. Clinton (1988) depicts stages in the growth of a Christian disciple in the context of how a person is shaped as a leader. But JK intimated that there was also a non-linear aspect to spirituality which meant that people were always 'giving out' of themselves as JK put it; a process of receiving and then sharing. Perrin (2007) affirms that 'more recent views recognize that human development is not strictly linear' (Perrin, 2007, p.223) and suggests that variables of culture, language, and symbols such as cyclical imagery, may help bring flexibility in our understanding around how a person grows spiritually. He also suspects the notion of definitive stages of growth as they imply a hierarchical passage from one level to the next. He sees this as a 'significant issue' (Perrin, 2007, p.224) since it undermines the knowledge of all people as being equal before God and dilutes understanding that 'Christian holiness does not reside on the merits of an individual person, but rather in the collective journey of a people being transformed in God together' (Perrin, 2007, p.224). There is equality amongst protestant Christians which stems from recognition that under the new covenant all baptised believers enter the 'holy priesthood' (1 Peter 2.5). JK and I were mutually investigating our Christian experience as we explored faith. This exploration encompassed questions about how to live out faith in work contexts.

#### *4.3.2.2 Mentoree*

JK was happy to investigate his faith. He had issues about church, but also faith, 'One of the frustrations I have about faith [is] it's so absolute, right, [...] there is no room for doubt [...] there isn't any room for dialogue. I've had one-on-ones with my pastor but it's not really exploring what living faith is about.' The SLJ process gave JK an opportunity to express what was real for him in a personal setting and he appreciated this, 'You can go to church, sing the hymns, have a cup of coffee. If you go to a prayer group or a Bible reading group there's always 10 people there – people can get uncomfortable if you start being open.' JK wanted to talk about 'what faith actually really means.' JK knew 'that God was in my life. I can see these incidences as God at work in my life even though I may not have known it then.' He felt that 'God's working all the time in the background – you just don't think he is. [But] he's been there all the time'. But in session three JK realised that he had not really been paying attention to God, and I used the session to heighten his awareness of when and how spiritual insights come to him. At the same time JK was 'beginning to challenge all the givens of Christian thinking' as

he considered how to interpret what it means to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. I saw it as healthy that JK was questioning his faith as he was inquiring into what it means to be a Christian in some depth. Sheldrake (1998) writes:

Spirituality, in Christian terms, concerns not some other life but simply human life at depth. Yet our understanding of what this means arises from what Christian revelation and tradition suggest about God, human nature and the relationship between the two. (Sheldrake, 1998, p.61)

As JK became more familiar with the spiritual territory he showed responsiveness in the way defined by Anderson and Reese (1999) as submitting 'willingly to the guidance of the mentor' (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.13). He was valuing the reflective space that the SLJ was giving him and acknowledged how important personal work was, 'I think I am still wrestling with a lot of stuff behind these ideas. It's something that people have to realise for themselves.' He had managed to identify spiritual practices that he liked and recognised these were helping him. He particularly valued the ability to talk things through with me. He commented, 'the more you talk about [things] the more you realise that actually God is there. You don't have to see him, you don't actually have to feel he is there – but he is [...] If you are swimming in the deep water, you've got to remember you've got a bloody big life jacket on!' I emphasised that it was important for him to recognise what his 'key spiritual choice-making moments' had been as I felt these could help him to develop his awareness. He was beginning to see life as a series of little decisions and realised that good decisions he had made in the past had fallen by the wayside. For example Bible reading, which JK had started with his wife 'we had an idea [...] that we would set the alarm [...] earlier. Then [someone] got a job and had to leave at 7.00 am. I thought there's no way I'm setting the alarm for 5.00 am so we stopped.' This type of distraction happened more than once. JK recognised that 'perfection was getting in the way of progress' and then said, 'I wonder if what we should do is not necessarily read the Bible, we should reflect and pray and talk about where we are now in our relationship with God basically and just work through it.' I felt JK wanted to work at his spiritual growth and that his willingness to be on a journey towards greater spiritual self-awareness was supporting him to investigate more deeply how to be in personal relationship with God. JK recognised that he was 'a doer' but in later life he was 're-balancing' his attitude and breadth of mind. He acknowledged that he had some 'defensive reactions' and that he had 'a sense of inadequacy'. As our journey progressed I felt I was able to get through to JK in a way that he had found hard to access previously.

Powell (2005) argues that Christian practice is an essential aspect of Christian faith, and that the church needs to help church members to realise that faith is not only an intellectual and cognitive assent to a set of doctrines (although he recognises that the church expects that its members will affirm these doctrines). Faith is also ethical and practical, affecting how life is lived. The Christian faith believes in the reality of the new world of God; this reality is transcendent in the sense of it not being mundane, it constitutes a contradiction to this world. To have Christian faith is to 'affirm the reality of a world of God's making that goes beyond this fallen world' (Powell, 2005, p.71). However the subjective aspect of faith concerns how we live in light of that belief:

the act of faith is an ethical act [...] it is, in part, our decision as to whether we will continue the life of sin unmindful of God or whether we will leave sin behind and embrace the kingdom of God and the new creation.  
(Powell, 2005, p.72)

The act of faith involves a decision to turn away from sin and, Powell argues, is related to conversion. Powell also highlights that 'the act of faith has [...] a transcendent source - God [and so] is grounded in our participation in God's Trinitarian life' (Powell, 2005, p.73). The act of faith is about how we become oriented to the world of God's new creation and participate in this world in light of that faith.

Retrospectively, I think that JK's biggest area for development was that of accountability (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.13). By accompanying him on his spiritual journey, I was assisting JK to persevere in his commitment to grow in faith and connect it to daily life. JK began to see that he had been making excuses about prioritising spiritual disciplines, such as daily Bible reading. He recognised that he had 'incessant agendas' and asked himself whether they were actually 'activity masquerading as progress?' JK commented 'it's interesting reading these spiritual exercise things, and thinking well I haven't got time to meditate, I never get time to pray all that much, I couldn't possibly go on a retreat.' JK admitted to struggling with prayer, 'Prayer – once you step into the tent (by which he meant the church) everyone assumes that you've got it, no-one talks to you about it anymore.' I acknowledged that prayer is difficult and requires a certain discipline. I encouraged JK to consider different ways to pray. I shared how I had learned to regard it as a space in which I could try to hear what God might be speaking to me about for that day. We looked at what JK could do, for example take short periods of reflection. This is something he had been doing throughout his life. I suggested, 'maybe it's helpful to think about structuring those short periods of reflection so that perhaps they go a little further? Maybe incorporate some scripture?' JK accepted that some spiritual

practices were easier for him to engage with and concluded session three by saying ‘there are three things I want to start doing more of. One of them is being in the place with more music, and reflection with music, it could be playing a CD at home. Another is more dialogue, talking these things through. And then the third one is prayer.’ I had presented a variety of approaches and methods towards prayer, and JK felt the session had been extremely beneficial, as it had helped him to apply faith in his working life.

One practice which emerged to support JK’s spiritual growth was writing. JK saw the value of writing as an aid to reflection but could not stick to journaling, even though he had been encouraged by his vicar to write a journal about his ‘growing Christian faith’. I encouraged him instead to write articles for publication to help him crystallise his thinking and provide a sense of momentum about his ideas having some influence. Our SLJ conversations did make a difference as JK wrote a number of articles that were later published examining social capital and the HDM. Our work together had led to empowerment in the way described by Anderson and Reese (1999) as ‘the discovery of one’s unique voice for kingdom service’ (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.13).

#### *4.3.3 JK 3: Discerning personal purpose and mission through the use of scripture*

##### *4.3.3.1 Mentor*

The foundation of my intention to support spiritual formation has been my belief and experience that the content of the Bible as God’s word can challenge and change us as we embrace it; we grow once we engage with what it says, and reflect on what that means for us. Barth (see Webster, 2000) recognised the biblical text as authoritative and substantial in its own right; it is ‘an instrument of divine speech’ (Webster, 2000, p.30). For Barth the content of scripture has a unifying centre in the affirmation of God’ (Webster, 2000, p.31) and:

The most important aspect of orienting ourselves in this situation is that we should read the gospel as gospel, as something “new and unheard of, truth that challenges all our other knowledge”. Thus “we hear (and understand) the Gospel only when we do not ignore that relationship between it and us, when we do not ignore the actuality or reality with which it does not so much stand over against us as encounter us”. (Webster, 2000, p.32, citing Barth, 1986)

Hoare (2015) who teaches spiritual formation at Wycliffe Hall (an evangelical theological college within the University of Oxford) recently published *Using the Bible in Spiritual Direction*. Her book has strengthened my resolve to use scripture as a mentor. Hoare’s emphasis is on paying attention to the experience of God by examining how ‘the living Word

speaks to us in the written word' (Hoare, 2015, p.18). I value this emphasis, even though, as she recognises, the 'question of how we read and interpret the Bible is [...] much contested' (Hoare, 2015, p.24). The emphasis on scripture provides spiritual weight, a foundational platform and a context for the spiritual relationship. Her book encouraged me to prioritise reading the Bible devotionally and to let God's word speak personally into situations and people's lives:

The point is not to wonder whether we agree with (the scriptures) or not, but to hear them speaking to us in our situation as God's personal word to us [...] There remains the imperative need to let the word of God dwell richly in us so that it addresses us personally in our hearts.  
(Hoare, 2015, p.37)

Hoare highlights the use of *lectio divina* that stems from Benedictine spirituality. The *lectio* involves a practice of slow, meditative reading of scripture which honours the words as holy words:

This means that we place ourselves in a position whereby Scripture can do something to us and we are submitting to its agenda rather than imposing our own on it.  
(Hoare, 2015, p.79)

Hoare thus emphasises the value of scripture within spiritual direction:

In spiritual direction neither director nor directee is "in charge" [...] Returning to a focus on what Scripture is saying enables this precious time to be given over to God. Learning to do this through slow, meditative *lectio* enables [...] the power of God's word [to become] transformative.  
(Hoare, 2015, p.79-80)

Hoare (2015) acknowledges that spiritual direction is an informal ministry, not accredited, and increasingly offered by lay people who have done 'some sort of training' (Hoare, 2015, p.35).

To provide support to the growing volume of people operating in the field she plants spiritual direction firmly in the Christian church. She suggests that:

keeping the Scriptures at the heart of direction is one way of ensuring that spiritual direction does not come adrift from its moorings within the Church and end up simply encouraging people to make up a spirituality of their own to suit their own desires. The wisdom that the spiritual director exercises derives from the Christian community.  
(Hoare, 2015, p.35)

And also:

directors will need to be paying attention to their own spiritual growth in which the scriptures occupy a central place as the instrument of God's shaping of our lives into the likeness of Christ. They will be reading and meditating on God's word so that it nourishes them. They will remain open to its challenges as well as its comforts. They will speak to God about what they read and listen to the response of the Spirit

speaking. In other words they will be doing for themselves what they are seeking to help their directees to learn.  
(Hoare, 2015, p.20)

Hoare's (2015) suggestions are ones that I have taken to heart. I have developed a discipline of prayer, and a variety of methods to keep reading the Bible. Hoare has simplified some of the mystique that can surround theology, quoting Evagrius of Pontus (345-99) who said that 'the one who prays is a theologian and a theologian is one who prays' (Hoare, 2015, p.21).

Hoare builds on this point:

Every Christian who begins to make connections with what they believe about God with the world around them and their everyday lives is doing theology [...] there are many similarities between the work of spiritual direction and theological reflection.  
(Hoare, 2015, p.21)

This resonates for me since I have often felt muddled over the boundaries between academic interpretations of the Bible and the personal impact it has when read devotionally. There are certain things I know about God because he has spoken to me through His word, and striving to make this intellectually robust has been a difficult challenge.

I was pleased that one aspect of JK's reflections showed scripture was beginning to have more meaning for him. His vicar had brought Hebrews 10.24 to his attention, 'let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds'. This scripture was really relevant to JK and became for him an expression of his calling. JK realised he had an urge 'to keep himself in the background', but was beginning to recognise that 'actually, I have got something to say'. This scripture came up in session five which built on earlier sessions and enabled JK to go into more depth. At the end JK felt 'that was a very good session, there's a unity in the approach that is coming through' and he was seeing the sessions as effective. But I reflected in my transcript notes, 'I am wondering about what the emphasis is – is it "a call to action" or is it about being drawn more fully into life in the presence of God?'

#### *4.3.3.2 Mentoree*

JK wanted to clarify his purpose and mission as a Christian, and it helped him to continue to explore the difficulty he had with church, 'Why do I not get as excited and enthusiastic at church as I do when I'm talking to the people at the computer society about social capital and holistic development?' He explained that the 'plank I've always had about church is we spend all our time studying the Bible but we don't do anything about culture.' I had enquired into whether JK had looked at his church life as one 'where you could actually influence things'. JK

knew that his vicar wanted him 'to be more active in the church' and JK did agree that he might be able to host conversations in church, but he said he felt called to work in the secular world. He recognised that his fellowship with other Christians was mainly happening through work oriented groups such as CABE<sup>40</sup> and EPICC. He also felt that EPICC was exciting and valuable and represented 'a group of like-minded people'. So he felt he was in the right environment, although he felt 'a bit impatient' because there wasn't much movement. I wanted to lead him to a greater depth of discernment about where and how he could focus his energy.

Discernment can involve deciding which spiritual direction you are taking as Helm (2014) points out, 'Discernment is the ability to recognise what is or is not of God or God's will, and to act accordingly' (Helm, 2014, p.18). The scripture which had come to JK's attention 'let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds' (Hebrews 10.24) was important for him. JK began to see how his years of experience in the 'old world' and his desire to challenge conventional wisdom were being brought together; that this was the arena where he could 'make a difference'. As I read the Hebrews 10.24 scripture aloud it crystallised for me that this scripture was for JK 'kind of your calling' and could be 'your guiding scripture'. This nuance resonated with JK who commented, 'Funny how you pulled that verse out. When I did the whole thing with (his vicar) it hadn't jumped out in the same way'. I attributed it to 'the work of the Holy Spirit' and JK responded 'right thing, right time, yes.'

This short exchange displays something of the discernment process, as well as something about vocation. Magdalen (2008) writes about personal vocation as God's call to each person to live the unique life of good deeds that God has prepared for him or her; everyone is not called in the same way, but we are all called to discover and do the good God has in mind for us. There is a strong relationship between faith and good works. Powell (2005) says scripture makes two points about this, 'First, we are saved by God's grace and not by or because of our works (Titus 3.4-5). Second we are to abound in good works (Titus 2.14)' (Powell, 2005, p.78). He clearly shows that God's grace is prior and primary, but this grace is then the source of good works. Through engagement with a variety of scriptural passages, but particularly the book of 1 John, Powell presents:

a profound picture of the Christian life, in which good works, considered as expressions of love, are not merely human deeds, but also the life of God within us [...] In this perspective, good works-love-are not something added to the knowledge of

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<sup>40</sup> Christian Association for Business Executives.

God. They are in fact the only form of knowing God [...] Since God is love, our acts of loving and our abiding in love mean that we are conformed to the nature of God. (Powell, 2005, p.80-81)

Powell makes the point that the ethical or practical dimension of faith is not a consequence of faith but is a form of faith, that the practise of the Christian life is the exercise of faith. He concludes that:

the New Testament compels us to affirm that the Christian faith includes a practical or ethical dimension and that persistent failure to practice the Christian life signals the absence of a living faith. (Powell, 2005, p.82)

In attempting to help JK to clarify the 'good deeds' that stemmed from his faith I shared some resources on vision and mission. JK 'liked the difference between a mission being what you are going to do, what's driving you, and vision being an end game'. The thrust of JK's vision was around doing things differently in business, 'about setting up balanced business models and helping people to thrive'; 'the answer is operating with a more balanced approach to business, more [focused on] people and relationships, more meaning in work.' As a 'doer' JK felt that his mission would lead to the vision. I felt that JK needed to identify what he meant by 'doing things differently'. In session five by working with 'ideal reality' (in the terms of the HDM) we were able to examine JK's mission which he articulated as 'to provoke the business world to see the potential that could be unleashed, which could help businesses to thrive much more'; 'to get more businesses operating in a way that helps people thrive, so that the businesses thrive, so that life is enriched.' I kept pushing, 'what does thriving and potential mean to you? When someone fills their potential?' JK responded that it was to do with a person being whole and that 'they are the best human being they can be'. This he clarified as people being all they could be and not pretending to be someone they were not. I asked JK, 'How can that actually happen in an office?' And that's where JK experienced difficulty, 'Well that's where I stop [because] you are designing an answer for an individual.' But he went on to expand that he would use models like the SCM and the Map of Meaning to encourage conversations, as he saw that these could help people to work out for themselves how thriving and release of potential can happen in their circumstances.

JK recognized there was uniqueness in every situation, work environment and relationship. Slipper (2016) also identifies the uniqueness of an individual even as they are transformed by God:

Personal transformation [...] is not about becoming another person but being the real person you are, enabled and enhanced by the Holy Spirit [...] We become [...] ourselves. This is the liberation unity brings. Far from lumping people together [...] it actually accentuates difference by bringing a person's uniqueness into sharper focus. It is the Trinitarian life of unity and distinction at work in human realization. It makes effective the glory of God, displayed in Jesus' prayer, in a human being fully alive and, as Irenaeus is quoted as saying so aptly, "The glory of God is the human being fully alive."<sup>41</sup> Loving others does not stop at the Christian community. It urges us to work for others outside the community and to share with everyone the community's discovery of being fully alive. Three things go together: personal transformation; community transformation; and the transformation of society. (Slipper, 2016, p.12-13)

I felt like JK had a glimpse of what the transformation of society might be about, but was struggling to know how to get people there, and to understand community.

Mission is tied closely with purpose by people such as Warren (2002) whose book *The Purpose Driven Life* has a wide influence. Warren suggests that God has five purposes for life which we are all called to fulfil: worship, fellowship, discipleship (to grow like Christ), ministry (to serve), and evangelism (mission). The last two points reflect how the love of God is shown outwardly in our lives. JK had previously been asking himself how he should love his neighbour; such a question underpins ethics and what constitutes moral behavior. Williams (2012) writes that when we think seriously about ethics we are beginning to see that our life is to reflect truth. He suggests that a specifically Christian ethic deeply roots us in our responsibility for each other; it involves us in caring for our neighbor. The 'moral depth of society' (Williams, 2012, p.213) is shown by how we speak up for, defend and enrich the lives of the vulnerable, people who are of 'no use to us' (Williams, 2012, p.213). JK's motivation seemed to be around how he could encourage work contexts to encompass such ethics. John Adair, who popularised the concept of vocation (Adair, 2000), suggests that 'vocation is best compared to an adventurous journey into the unknown, one that calls for resourcefulness and creativity as well as the qualities of initiative, moral courage and perseverance' (Adair, 2000, p.91). This spirit of adventure was an important element when it came to examining how JK might be able to let go of his own way of guiding his destiny and invite God to guide him more explicitly. I felt the SLJ process was helping JK to examine the call on his life, and through it we were both able to focus on how faith is linked to the workplace, with potential implications for leadership.

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<sup>41</sup> This is Slipper's Footnote: *Against Heresies*, Book 4, 20:7. The full quotation shows a contemplative focus in harmony with the prayer of Jesus. It can be rendered as 'The glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God'.

#### 4.3.4 JK 4: Adventure and leadership

##### 4.3.4.1 Mentor

Campolo and Darling (2007) and Barton (2006, 2008) fuel a sense that the call from God sets us on a path of adventure which is likely to move us towards leadership. It is as we discern how our walk with God informs our activities that we can begin to become people who lead. We show by the change in ourselves that there is a way of life that can bring hope, light, and love to others. This change in ourselves impacts all the places where we are, and so must include our life in the organizations in which we work. My perception of genuine Christian leadership is that it starts with being Christian first; the leadership possibilities are second. Spiritual formation thus takes priority over leadership formation.

The notion of leadership formation is proffered by Western (2008) as part of his critique of leadership studies. He describes four key leadership discourses - leader as: controller; therapist; messiah, and moving towards eco-leader. The last takes account of the social world in which leadership discourses take place and it is here that he emphasizes leadership formation, rather than leadership development<sup>42</sup>, as being part of the way forward for leadership being and thinking. Leadership formation draws attention to the inner person, and encourages reflection on how identity is being constructed; it supports the leader to explore who they are becoming. Western suggests that for leadership formation to be successful it also must be holistic, whilst being embedded in organizational culture using both formal and informal processes. He emphasizes the parallels between mentoring, coaching and spiritual direction. His approach also compares monastic community living with that of people development in organizations. Drawing together these often polarized worlds in such a way signals that the spiritual life has wisdom to offer the leadership discourse.

Western's (2008) emphasis on leadership formation provides a vocabulary to connect our spiritual life with our involvement in organizational life, since leadership formation enables deep reflection about oneself and the social influence and impact of one's life. This is clearly significant for SAW where the connection between inner life and leadership is recognized.

Senge *et al* (2005) state:

The blind spot concerns not the what and how – not what leaders do and how they do it – but the who: who we are and the inner place or source from which we operate both individually and collectively.  
(Senge *et al*, 2005, p.5)

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<sup>42</sup> Leadership development covers a broader base in that it refers to any activity that enhances the quality of leadership within an individual or organization.

Similarly, Scazzero (2006) writes, 'The key to successful spiritual leadership has much more to do with the leader's internal life than with the leader's expertise, gifts or experiences'

(Scazzero, 2006, p.20). The inner and outer dimension is important within the field of SAW:

Understanding spirituality at work begins with acknowledging that people have both an inner and outer life and that the nourishment of the inner life can lead to a more productive and meaningful outer life.

(Ashmos and Duchon, 2000)

Ashmos and Duchon define spirituality in work as 'recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community' (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, p.139). There is a flow around spirituality and leadership; learning might start by examining either closely.

However, Runcorn (2011 [online]) challenges the notion of leadership, through his comparison of the Old Testament to our world:

The neglected truth is that it is not just gifted leaders we need if we are to be saved. It is the gift of *being led* and of being community. [We] struggle with the place of God, theology and faith in the midst of it all. Now we expect to hear this of our own age, but it is more surprising to find it among God's people in the Bible. But time and again events that begin in the name of God quickly abandon prayer, forsake listening and embrace strategies based on power and pragmatism. We are called to be vulnerably, prophetically and subversively *different*. Then and now, the need is to find God in all this. We are called to a deeper conversion.

(Runcorn, 2011, paragraph 14 [online])

The need to be in community in order to deepen faith has become more significant to me as a result of my research analysis. As we follow God we are called to work with and for others. As well as following God for our own personal salvation, the leading of God's Spirit takes us towards loving others and guides us to look at our work with others in new ways. But the central key is in the way in which we are able to follow God; that valuable relationship gives divine authority to anyone who is seen as a leader. The vital learning is to recognize that the spiritual life takes priority over leadership; Spiritual formation opens our capacity to learn and gives those aspiring to leadership access to a relational orientation both with a personal God and with other people.

I have worked to understand the join between spirituality and leadership through my call to support Christian leaders with their spiritual development. My own spiritual adventure has led me to leadership recently, through my volunteer work as an editorial member of Grove Books leadership, and spirituality, series - latterly becoming Convener of the spirituality series. Grove Books is an evangelical ministry, providing Christian resources on a broad range of issues. I

have learned from Grove's accumulated wisdom. Working for Grove has helped me to see how my own wrestling in prayer, meditation, reading and reflection, is a widely shared concern; I see these groups as being supportive of the ministry spiritual guidance.

#### *4.3.4.2 Mentoree*

JK appreciated the concept of adventure, acknowledging that he had become bored in his old job. He had been looking for something and said 'when I finally came to terms with the Map of Meaning [I thought] here is something that is different and enhancing. For me that's what the adventure is actually.' JK was aligned with the idea that 'you only have one life.' JK thought that the 'one life plays out in a number of ways' and he saw the HDM as being a good tool to help think about life, particularly as the HDM was 'counter cultural [...] against the individualistic, common man type culture'. In exploring the space between inspiration and reality I said 'it is not about you trying to improve yourself but allowing God to transform you' and that this was assisted by 'the keeping of your spiritual practices'. I offered the view that 'transformation is what God is doing' and therefore spiritual awakening and transformation involve redefining oneself in relation to God. We agreed that life with God was an adventure and the spiritual journey was a call to adventure, a call to a deeper conversion. We agreed that we could not always 'see where God is leading' and that this sense of 'unknowing' was part of the adventure and the transformation process.

The process of self-knowledge is a deep part of spiritual formation. Foster (1992) describes self-knowledge as a 'priceless grace' (Foster, 1992, p.30). However, it is not to be regarded as an individualistic or hedonistic search in pursuit of self-fulfilment, but a journey inwards in the company of God. Others agree that understanding the self is a route to knowing God (Silf, 1998; Hagberg and Guelich, 1989). Benner (2004) writes:

We have focused on knowing God and tended to ignore knowing ourselves [...] Leaving the self out of Christian spirituality results in a spirituality that is not well grounded in experience. It is, therefore, not well grounded in reality [...] This is dangerous to the soul of anyone – and in spiritual leaders it can also be disastrous for those they lead. (Benner, 2004, p.20-21)

Palmer (2004) gives attention to the inner journey and explains that culture discourages us from paying attention to the soul or true-self in two ways. The first is secularism 'which regards the human self as a social construct with no created core' and the second is moralism 'which regards all concern for self as "selfish"' (Palmer, 2004, p.35). He sees that our inner (backstage) and outer (onstage) life become divided and that our true self then gets lost. He argues that spiritual awakening helps us to see that we co-create reality in two ways: by

sending something from within ourselves into the world which has an impact 'out there', and by the world sending back things which have an impact 'in here'. He suggests 'we have the power to choose, moment by moment, between that which gives life and that which deals death' (Palmer, 2004, p.48). Deuteronomy 30.19 says a similar thing, 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live'. Deuteronomy 30 continues, in verse 20, to show the choice for life includes 'loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you'.

Dionysus (see Oxford Reference, 2016 [online]) initiated the characterisation of Christian development into three ways which form a singular journey: the purgative way, the illuminative way, and the unitive way. Perrin (2007) writes about how these can take us 'ever more deeply in the life and love of God' (Perrin, 2007, p.248). My early awareness of the spiritual journey led me to design the SLJ, and to examine how it might be linked to leadership. Using the SLJ has helped me to deepen my understanding. The need to set out on the purgative way 'comes when an individual realizes that [they have] a further desire for growth and maturation' (Perrin, 2007, p.250). The purgative way describes the journey of somebody who has become aware of the need to change and wants to do something about it. In Christian terms a person becomes deeply aware of their personal need for conversion and may set out to become more intentional about prayer, and to live with greater freedom in relationship to others, to the world, to God and to themselves. The purgative way 'questions business as usual' (Perrin, 2007, p.251) and people may decide to schedule time to focus consciously on prayer and reading of scripture.

What the purgative way begins to correct is people's false sense of reality and their relationship to it [...] more significantly the purgative way seeks to purify one's image of God and reorient one toward the truth of God in one's life and in the life of the world.

(Perrin, 2007, p.251)

JK had certainly begun to question business as usual, and made time to explore his thinking.

After a period of transition a Christian may enter into the illuminative way. There is shift from discursive prayer<sup>43</sup> and active self-discipline:

into a more contemplative form of prayer and self-possession. The paradox here is that far from becoming self-absorbed and self-preoccupied [...] the Christian realizes more than ever that life is lived from a well of life deep within that expresses itself in an active love towards others, the world and God.

(Perrin, 2007, p.252)

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<sup>43</sup> Discursive prayer is the conscious and deliberate saying of prayers.

The Christian is 'illuminated' by the loving grace of God, spends time in silence in loving awareness of God; the false self is stripped away to reveal a more authentic notion of self in relationship to the loving presence of God in the world. Perrin writes, 'In the illuminative way the Christian becomes more attuned to a realm of reality that he or she was unaware of before' (Perrin, 2007, p.253). This way may last for many years as a person becomes more conformed to the heart and mind of God, and the Christian becomes radically aware that only God's loving grace can achieve fullness of life. It seemed as though JK was growing into this space of illumination.

There is a point of purification in this process, commonly known as the dark night of the soul, which Perrin (2007) claims is the culmination of the illuminative way. Much has been written about this experience but it is associated most with John of the Cross. It is called a dark night since the natural light of one's own capacity to make sense of things no longer works, and yet the light of God has not been revealed in full. The dark night is a state of existence 'that opens up radical awareness of one's absolute and utter dependence on God' (Perrin, 2007, p.254). Something of the dark night can also be learned from *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous guide to contemplative prayer from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Paradoxically, this is a kind of knowing by not knowing - not seeking God through thinking and intellect, but through love and surrender. There is a kind of darkness (invisibility) about God but we can have a will to pray and a heart of prayer that reaches out to God and allows God to reach back to us. Gobry writes:

Prayer is God making you more like Jesus, this naturally leads to a greater awareness of your sin, and a greater awareness of the ugliness in your soul, and it is harrowing. This is the dark night of the soul.  
(Gobry, 2014, paragraph 5 [online])

The 'dark night' was not a space JK identified with, but he became more aware of it through our work together. I introduce the concept of the dark night of the soul within the SLJ process not because I expect people to instantly have such an experience, but to raise awareness of the potential depths of the spiritual journey that may lay ahead for them.

The unitive way follows, bringing a sense of immediacy and closeness to God, as a Christian experiences the presence of God deep within:

The unitive way represents the completion of the transformation as one's life conforms to God's [...] All aspects of his or her life have been directed toward the love of God.  
(Perrin, 2007, p.255)

I have examined the path of the spiritual journey as it provides insights into the nature of human spiritual growth. In the spiritual journey one becomes aware of oneself as lacking, one seeks to know more of God, then knowledge of God becomes more and more real until God becomes fully one's life. This growing realisation is something that has struck me more forcefully, and which I had begun to signal to JK.

In session one of the SLJ I had suggested that JK's faith and leadership journey might be connected, 'I think that the leadership journey is the abundant life. It is exciting because you are being used [whereas] church is supposed to keep you going [...] It's supposed to give you encouragement, remind you of basic things.' However, I was surprised to find that JK was not very keen on the concept of leadership. His experience as a consultant had led him to be dissatisfied with 'conventional wisdom' and 'the status quo' which he saw as limiting change. JK saw leadership as one of the elements of conventional wisdom and as such he was inclined to reject it. For JK, the priority was to value people as human beings; he recognised that people have got different gifts, and all gifts are needed. He said, 'If more effort had been put into helping [...] line managers to be content in themselves, they would have been more likely to do it [leadership] rather than being hung up about their role as leaders, as managers. Their leadership/management capability would have been a by-product of them being content in themselves. We can't just have a conversation with people about the SCM if people are screwed up in the industrial system. Something personal, like this (the SLJ process), needs to help them break themselves out before they can break their organizations out.' JK felt that everyone had a role to play and was not keen to emphasise leadership. He believed that community and mutual support were needed to encourage personal transformation if there was to be any corporate transformation. JK was revealing insights that serve as a critique of the popularity of the concept of leadership. This was an important turn in my action research cycles where I began to identify that my focus on leadership might be mis-placed.

JK helped me to think of the HDM as a tool that 'goes beyond leadership [...] it is more holistic than just leadership.' I was encouraged by JK valuing the HDM as something bigger than leadership, and his insight opened up a more expansive space of reflection for me; I began to reorient my vision of my work as being about the spiritual life more than leadership development. The HDM opens up questions about the whole of life, but because it encompasses spirituality it has helped me to position spiritual formation as being the critical concern. And given my evangelical perspective, spirituality has to include examination of how

to become closer to God through prayer since, as Leech (1988) points out, 'the division between "prayer" and "work" becomes blurred and unreal' (Leech, 1988, p.8). All of the Christian life concerns God's activity in this world; and God is involved in all parts of the Christian's life. Leech sees that 'all Christian life, all discipleship, is prayer' (Leech, 1988, p.8), and emphasises prayer as 'the rhythm of encounter and response [...] a living encounter with a living God' (Leech, 1988, p.8). It seems that wherever I turn in my thinking God is there as the beginning and the end. God moves towards us and we can move towards God. The life of prayer is our life as Christians in that 'we are seeking to achieve a continuous state of recollection and of wakefulness to the reality and presence of God' (Leech, 1988, p.8). Such prayer is linked to knowledge, and to:

contemplative insight, involving communion and sharing. Prayer is [therefore] inseparable from theology [...] growth in prayer and growth in theology always go together [because they] are concerned with the experience of God.  
(Leech, 1988, p.9)

What has become clear to me as a result of my research is that, for Christians, faith must be a:

sustained decision to take God with utter seriousness as the God of my life. It is to live out each hour in a practical, concrete affirmation that God is Father [...] It is a decision to shift the centre of our lives from ourselves to him, to forego self-interest and make his interests, his will our sole concern.  
(Burrows, 2006, p.21)

No matter what difficulties, struggles, problems or challenges we face in ordinary, everyday life, we can put on the viewpoint of Jesus and learn to look, and live, differently.

#### *4.3.5 JK 5: Difficulty and struggle*

##### *4.3.5.1 Mentor*

My intention was to encourage JK to strengthen his relationship with God, and I was learning what resources were effective in enabling this. My difficulty through my SLJ process was to keep things simple and focus on the essentials. I learned that 'less is more' and my focus should be on making room for people to talk, pray and reflect on scripture. Through my embellished use of the HDM, adding materials and exercises, I was in danger of overcomplicating things. JK did not like some of the resources I introduced and felt it was better simply to reflect. However, JK did value talking using the model 'my gut reaction, the attraction of this, is that it allows me to talk about things in my language [...] I don't like a lot of [tools] because they put [...] constraints on thinking. [Tools] make it easier for the facilitator, but means the content doesn't come out.' In session two JK expressed that he was valuing the

reflective process ‘one thing I got from the last session was just appreciating what my life has been. You don’t think about that really – it brings things out again.’

Cockerton (1994) writes about the danger of relying on techniques, and that evangelical spirituality revolves around prayer as a means toward intimacy with God, and being ‘a constantly attentive listener to the Word, the incarnate Word himself and the Word of Holy Scripture which testifies to him’ (Cockerton, 1994, p.23). Cockerton emphasized that the thrust of spirituality is to do with a believer’s personal relationship with God. As a mentor, I must consider my own commitment to Christ as my spiritual life affects how well I can guide others. In *The Cost of Discipleship* Bonhoeffer (1995 [1937]) conveys how obedience to follow Christ, regardless of personal cost, is what it means to be a disciple. Bonhoeffer wrote about ‘costly grace’ which is:

costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says “My yoke is easy and my burden is light”.  
(Bonhoeffer, 1995 [1937], p.39)

I recognise that freedom in Christ comes with great responsibility; the life of faith is tied to obedience. The actual life of Bonhoeffer demonstrated how obedience to Christ is coupled with social action and personal sacrifice.

This has resonance for JK whose focus is on social action, but the challenge for JK is how much of his interest in social action is joined to obeying the calling of Jesus on his life? Webster (2000) highlights the paradox:

God’s Kingdom is not to be equated with social action and yet the transcendent rule of God evokes Christian action in society. “What” Barth asks [...] “can the Christian in society do but follow attentively what is done by *God?*”  
(Webster, 2000, p.143, citing Barth, 1928)

Good human action is action that is defined at every point by Jesus Christ, and we should act in conformity with the reality of God’s grace (Webster, 2000, p.155).

#### 4.3.5.2 *Mentoree*

Since starting the SLJ JK had clarified that ‘engagement of faith with the world, that’s what I’m interested in’, but he had many questions. He recognised that despite ‘becoming a Christian’ he was still a ‘secular person’, and he was struggling to come to terms with that. He was wrestling with being transformed. JK’s struggle is familiar to Christians. Cockerton (1994) conveys that struggle is part of the gradual process of sanctification which leads to a ‘progressive renunciation of all things which disrupt a believer’s relationship with God’

(Cockerton, 1994, p.17). The believer has attitudes and actions which express faith and love towards God at the same time as having states of mind and heart, inclinations and habits, which lead away from God and the fulfilling of his will. As one matures in the inner life, there is an increasing ability to be in conversation with God, warts and all, about how to live. Gradually we recognise that change can only be 'accomplished by the Holy Spirit working within us' (Cockerton, 1994, p.18). Cockerton places this struggle in the context of a battle for holiness which he acknowledges is complicated but needs to be taken seriously as 'faithfulness to the Bible requires nothing less' (Cockerton, 1994, p.19).

JK found it hard to acknowledge that the spiritual journey might involve difficulty as he felt he had not experienced much of that. It was a challenging area for us to explore. We examined it in session four, under the HDM umbrella of reality as embracing imperfections. I suggested that it was in the place of weakness and difficulty that we are able to access a sense of God being with us in a new way; that we have 'shaping experiences [a] sense of being alone, then going through some despondency or crisis of some sort, and then that brings you something you wouldn't have without that, which takes you further forward.' I believed that this was where spiritual maturity could lead us to, a time of deep challenge. JK did not like to 'go into the depths of the negative' and preferred to frame investigation as, 'What's stopping you from using the gifts God's given you.' He was not interested in the concept of 'the dark night of the soul' but wanted to look at strengths and what was good and positive. Although he began to recognize that maybe there were things that had been 'shut away, that you don't really want to confront [...] all that's true.' And later he said, 'I think the road of trials is your enquiring phase. Well "I don't know". The reason I go against the dark night is that [it has] connotations of horror for me. I don't mind not knowing'. I said I thought God did lead us 'into places we don't find particularly comfortable and we just have to trust that where we are going is what he is leading us to do'; this was part of the journey of faith. Despite JK attempting to stay away from difficulty, over time it was possible to see that he was experiencing some difficulty. Slowly JK acknowledged that 'embracing imperfections is a really powerful aspect of the model. It allows you to say that we don't not expect there to be imperfections in the world but it's how you deal with them that's important.'

In exploring imperfections I looked at liminality. The word liminal comes from the Latin word *limens*, meaning literally, threshold. It is a place of transition and waiting. Barton (2008), drawing on Rohr (she gives no date), describes the liminal space as:

a unique spiritual position where human beings hate to be but where the biblical God is leading them. It is when you have left the tried and true, have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are finally out of the way. It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. If you are not trained in how to hold anxiety, how to live with ambiguity, how to entrust and wait, you will run [...] anything to flee this terrible cloud of unknowing.  
(Barton, 2008, p.98)

It seemed to me that JK was on the edge of this liminal space. He had left a secure career and was carving out a new way forward that involved spirituality. Yet he was still partially reliant on old habits and ways of being, reluctant to let go of control, and feeling like he had an answer of sorts. Rohr (2007) points out that 'we need transformed people today, not just people with answers' (Rohr, 2007, p.7). I think JK was being led to go on a journey with God towards a deeper conversion and transformation, and this was something he was only just beginning to grasp.

Over the two years I worked with JK I saw that, despite his positivity, he struggled to find a group of people he felt he could work with. This was connected to JK's need to find the 'right answer'. He felt that his 'answer' was that he had the 'catalytic approach' and 'a lot of content that I can feed in as questions into that catalytic process'. JK wanted to find people 'who will react to my catalytic'. But he had also begun to recognize difficulty in that 'wherever I am now is not working' and acknowledged that he was 'wrestling with the baggage of being in a job for 25 years where you were expected to have the answer'. By session six, where we explored unity with others, his struggle was noticeable even to himself, 'I'm always transitioning and that's beginning to worry me as well'. JK talked about letting go of his old paradigm and moving towards a new paradigm but found that it was messy, complex and personally challenging to do. I asked JK, 'How does your sense of the ideal translate to a governing thought or mission?' JK had identified this in an earlier session but I was attempting to get him to work through how he was going about it. He wanted to 'operationalise a new management paradigm so business needs to run itself differently so it needs to set up systems and mechanisms that embed new thinking into the way they run the organization.' JK wanted to help businesses to thrive but was finding that it was difficult to find people 'who will be interested in what I think'. I recognized his situation 'you have put a lot of effort and energy into something; you've got a lot of beliefs about what is possible, but nothing is sticking'. JK had learned that many things about the way business was run is wrong, like managing change and managing people, and he wanted to influence cultural change by getting people into a conversational space to talk about the new paradigm.

JK's approach believed there was a better way of doing things. Paradoxically, Barth (see Webster, 2000) had mocked 'the happy gentleman of culture who [...] drives up [...] in his little car of progress and so cheerfully displays the pennants of his various ideals'<sup>44</sup> (Webster, 2000, p. 26), condemning liberal, positive, cultural Protestantism as self-wrought human righteousness and an evasion of the *krisis* (judgment) and will of God. Webster (2000) summarises that Barth was turning away from 'an entire culture, from a whole set of understandings of the nature and purpose of human persons, history and institutions [and] the source of the protest is theological' (Webster, 2000, p.28). I felt that JK was caught up in the transition of realizing there were things wrong with the world, which stemmed from his becoming Christian, but he had not yet grasped how the necessary transformation of the world is only possible with God.

JK was questioning 'conventional wisdom', but to do so was modeling himself on Socrates who valued dialogue, which JK saw as part of his own 'answer'. He reasoned 'a starting point is to make the case to have the dialogue which says there is a better future and it contains these things, and the barriers to it are these [...] these are worth addressing [...] so let's have this dialogue.' When JK spoke about purpose he seemed to think that it was achievable if he could just get into a dialogue with people. I was hoping JK would be able to move towards an understanding of purpose as something which stems from God and not our own ideas if it is to be spiritually fruitful. When JK spoke about having 'an answer' I couldn't always work out what exactly it was that JK thought would be of value? We seemed to talk around it, and I wanted him to be able to articulate it for me. I also wanted to help him work out that it was tied to his spiritual life.

I recognise that the word dialogue has a significant foundation (Howard, 1999). The Greek word *dialogos*, encompasses *dia*, meaning through; and *logos*, meaning the word. Isaacs (1999) writes, 'In essence, a dialogue is a flow of meaning' (Isaacs, 1999, p. 19), and '*logos* may be best rendered in English as "relationship" and so dialogue is a conversation in which people think together in relationship' (Isaacs, 1999, p.19). However, the Word also has a theological interpretation. John 1.1 states 'In the Beginning was the Word'; here the Word is translated from *logos* and is generally recognised to be Jesus Christ. Barth (see Webster, 2000) speaks of scripture, text and the gospel as:

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<sup>44</sup> From Barth, K, 1928, *The Righteousness of God, The Word of God and the Word of Man*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, p.17.

a Word that is spoken to us [...] in the name of God [...] a Word which [...] has opened up a dialogue with us, a dialogue which, because it is conducted in the name of God, we cannot escape<sup>45</sup>  
(Webster, 2000, p.32)

Dialogue can be a way to discover shared meaning and mutual understanding amongst participants, but also may enable recognition of new possibilities that make sense of differing viewpoints.

In a similar vein, the Emerging Church movement (Borg, 2003; Mobsby, 2007; Tickle 2008) emphasises the need for a conversational approach to mission, one which is more 'relational and transformational' (Borg, 2003, p. 13) and involves dialogue. Isaacs (1994) shows that dialogue can help to penetrate through people's perceptions:

The theory of dialogue suggests that breakdowns in the effectiveness of teams and organizations are reflective of a broader crisis in the nature of how human beings perceive the world. As a natural mechanism to develop meaning, people learn to divide the world into categories and distinctions in [their] thoughts. We then tend to become hypnotised by these distractions, forgetting that we created them. [They] become our reality, with a seemingly independent power over us. [...] Instead of reasoning together, people defend their "part" seeking to defeat others. If fragmentation is a condition of our times, then dialogue is one tentatively proven strategy for stepping back from the way of thinking that fragmentation produces. (Isaacs, 1994, p.359-360)

Stripping back reality is possible through dialogue, as each participant brings a piece of the truth that may not be understood by others, so it is believed that in dialogue we can understand more together than we can separately. However, whilst dialogue is valuable to a certain extent, I don't see it as a complete solution as it ultimately depends on conceptions of truth that are shared. Christians are urged to be active about 'speaking the truth in love' (Ephesians 5.15), and that for me is how the value of dialogue can be realised.

JK linked dialogue with diversity in the sense that 'everyone has a point of view'. Yet JK was frustrated by how people could not seem to 'trust each other and really value the diversity we've got'. Ward (2015 [online]) gently argues that diversity is essential for Christianity, in that since core relationship with Jesus is personal then like all personal relationships it differs:

Everybody's relationship's going to be different from everybody else's. So that's part of what revelation is, it's your encounter with God through Christ. Obviously, some of the things you see and say are going to be different from other people so diversity is essential to Christianity.  
(Ward, 2015, 0.32 to 0.51 [online])

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<sup>45</sup> From Barth, K, (1986), *Witness to the Word, A commentary on John 1*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.5.

Yet, Ward does emphasise that a living encounter with Christ should be the main focus of Christianity. Jesus' life provides a witness to the reality of God as unlimited self-giving love (see Ward, 2015, 17.16 – 17.26 [online]). As Christian spiritual formation involves a process of being conformed to the image of Christ, it becomes clear that we are to model self-giving love too. The spiritual life is not only about individual conversion, it includes ongoing transformation which ensures we become a vessel for the self-giving love of God to be poured into the lives of others. How we translate this personal truth into action requires us to use our own minds, and hearts, to discern what God is directing us to do in our own context. Being in conversation with others is meaningful but can be questioned from within a Christian perspective to evaluate how it aligns with Godly wisdom.

#### **4.4 Emerging Theme 4 – How I can enable spiritual formation**

##### *4.4.1 Being a spiritual mentor*

My work with JK enabled me to assess my capability as a spiritual mentor. JK affirmed strongly that mentoring is important, and in particular that the use of the HDM to explore spirituality was helpful. JK was very positive about me and valued having space to dialogue. According to Anderson and Reese's (1999) five movements in the spiritual mentoring process (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.13), research cycle one and two showed how the first movement, attraction, and second movement, relationship, were shaped. In research cycle three the remaining three movements: responsiveness, accountability and empowerment are demonstrated. We both recognised that the role of a spiritual mentor is one which can challenge a person to consider how God might be present in their life and stimulate them to move forward in new ways.

What I have sensed of my capabilities as a spiritual mentor connects with Guenther's (2008) description of herself as 'an amateur' (Guenther, 2008, p.1). Yet as an amateur one:

who loves, loves the art that she serves, loves and prays for the people who trust her, loves the Holy Spirit who is the true director in this strange ministry called spiritual direction.

(Guenther, 2008, p.1)

Guenther, in fact, offered spiritual direction in a professional capacity, but regardless of her humility, Guenther's book *Holy Listening* is an oft-cited resource in the field, and is of particular value to women who want to explore their calling to spiritual direction. My steps towards offering spiritual guidance professionally, using the HDM in my work with EPICC and JK, have demonstrated my intentional approach to fulfill my sense of calling around spiritual

mentoring. The landscape of learning how to be a spiritual director, and to work as one professionally, is still being resolved for me, and remains a source of inquiry and development. Yet, my inquiry has been developmental as it has generated confidence within me about my own ability to take up a position which can speak from a place of spiritual authority into people's lives.

As the SLJ progressed I was able to speak into JK's situation with greater discernment. JK initially selected positive incidents to tell his story rather than show weaknesses and any sense of inadequacy. I supported JK to notice his life held tension between living a comfortable life, and being passionate about his ideals. The SLJ helped JK to become more proactive and decisive about taking action, for example he overcame the obstacles that had kept him from writing for *Faith in Business Quarterly*. JK felt that the session where this clarity was gained had been 'quite illuminating [...] it's been great'. JK's internal motivation had shifted as he had looked at his values, seen that he had not been living them out fully, and he had connected his ideas to specific presentational forums, both in person and in writing. He was paying more attention to how God had worked in his life 'there is a different emphasis in that (the sessions are) deepening awareness of where God was during certain phases of life [...]'. JK was becoming more aware that the Spirit needed to be stirred up and fanned into flame. I clarified this for JK when I said as part of session four 'this whole thing is not about you trying to improve yourself but allowing God to transform you [...] the keeping of your spiritual practices in the tension of living out your daily life in all its manifestations such as the HDM brings (to awareness).' JK understood, 'yes, this letting go of ego, losing yourself so you can find yourself.' Later he commented: 'actually the more you talk [...] the more you realise God is there.'

As my journey of faith has developed so has my understanding and experience of how God is at work; my research demonstrates how my approach has been of help to others. Although imperfect, I see that my commitment to God, my intention to stay in alignment with God's will for my life, my habits of prayer, worship and involvement in the life of the church put me in a good place to be able to encourage others on their spiritual journey. In addition, although the church as a community of faith supports spiritual formation it can be insufficient as Christians need to wrestle personally with their faith. There is a need to 'work out your own salvation' (Philippians 2.12). My research has prompted me to develop my skills; I have intentionally sought training in spiritual direction in order to support others with their spiritual formation.

#### 4.4.2 *Spiritual formation for the mentoree*

Through my role as spiritual mentor for JK a sacred, high trust, relational space was opened between us. On a one-to-one basis I helped JK to feel safe and he was able to trust me with his innermost thoughts. Our work together deepened our understanding of what transformation really means. Mezirow (1991) wrote about ‘the significance of transformative adult learning’ (Mezirow, 1991, p.3) and explored the dynamics involved in perspective transformation, which he describes as ‘the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world’ (Mezirow, 1991, p.167). According to Mezirow, perspective transformation can happen when an individual is between established patterns of thought and behaviour and in a space of uncertainty and transition, a liminal<sup>46</sup> space (Mezirow, 1991, p.3).

JK inhabited a liminal space during our work together since he had left his senior partnership role and moved towards free-lance SAW consultancy work. Mezirow (1991) argues that:

in order to be free we must be able to “name” our reality, to know it divorced from what has been taken for granted, to speak with our own voice. Thus it becomes crucial that the individual learn to negotiate meanings, purposes and values critically, reflectively, and rationally, instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others.  
(Mezirow, 1991, p.3)

Through my willingness to explore spiritual reality, and through my choice to be explicit about how a person’s spiritual growth affects their learning and leadership potential, I was able to help JK grapple with his reality, and his identity, within the territory of SAW. Our work together was built on a platform of shared willingness to explore and discover how we might operate in the SAW space together.

The SLJ process nurtured JK’s faith. It supported him to open up about how hard it was to sustain his connection to God. I know this struggle myself, and how hard it is to devote time to God as we are distracted by many things. JK had found that at his church ‘prayer is not much talked about.’ This affirms what Cockerton (1994) wrote, ‘It has been too readily assumed that Evangelical people *know* how to say their prayers and will keep going without recourse to help from others’ (Cockerton, 1994, p.22). My guidance to JK about prayer stemmed from an evangelical perspective of ‘reaching out to the personal God’ (Cockerton, 1994, p.14) where prayer is a form of dialogue with God. I was expressing to JK my own experience of trusting in

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<sup>46</sup>I explain the term liminal, and my work with JK around this theme, in section 4.3.5.

prayer, whilst at the same time knowing that it can be hard work to do so. I emphasised spiritual practices to help JK find and maintain habitual ways to keep meeting with God.

In sessions three and six I prayed explicitly at the outset and we both noticed a sense of depth and meaning penetrated the sessions. Session three was where I suggested to JK that prayer focuses our soul on God, who is greater than our concepts of him, and that if we do not turn to God in prayer we are relying on our own strength. Session six was where I prayed that the Holy Spirit would lead the conversation and that it would be enriching for JK. I prayed for wisdom for JK and excitement about the future. I prayed for blessing on my facilitation and for a real connection in fellowship. In the session itself I was much more challenging of JK, moving him to greater self-awareness and the session included more use of scripture. I don't know what prevented me from opening sessions four and five in prayer, but I can see that when I took courage to set the example to trust in God, his presence was more fully felt by us. JK at one point wondered if he had been 'shutting out the things God's trying to say' and was moved to consider perhaps going on retreat to support greater listening and discernment. At the end of session six JK really appreciated my approach and the session. I think session six was our most impactful session. By session seven JK felt he had worked through a lot, was gaining some clarity and was re-energised. He said, 'I'm now in a position where I actually do believe in what we are trying to do'. He realised that I was 'right about making space to reflect.' JK acknowledged that it was helpful to have honest conversations to be able to get people to a place where they can be free to talk about what is important. The SLJ process reflects an observation made in session four, that you can only transform people to the degree you've been transformed yourself.

There was mutual learning. JK challenged me so see the SLJ as being about more than leadership development. He recognized 'that what you are delivering here is something whereby better leadership is a by-product of the HDM. And it will be a more difficult sell therefore. If you call it a leadership development tool you are in touch with the vocabulary that leadership is in, it's another form of coaching, it's another form of authentic leadership [...] to be unfair to it, it's just another list of things to think about.' JK spoke with conviction, 'We are where we are (in the world) because things are not working. We need to do something different'. JK helped me to gain clarity and I responded, 'I agree with you, and perhaps that's some of the trouble I've been having with this leadership thing; it's about being who you are meant to be and doing what you are meant to do [...] which is everybody's life.'

As recognized in Chapter 3, Christian spirituality actually gets away from exclusivity – the grace of God is for all. JK helped me to refocus on what was important about the spiritual centre of the HDM. Whilst I have designed the SLJ process to assist people to think about their faith in the context of their leadership, I am now more convicted that it is the faith aspect which needs to be given priority as this is where the spiritual root of leadership is to be found.

Combined thinking and practice have helped me to become more confident about articulating that spiritual formation is an area in which I can develop a consultancy offering. I originally developed the SLJ around the premise that spirituality and leadership are very much intertwined. However that leadership aspect is not now the most significant area of my concern. I see that the particulars of a person's leadership may stem from a person's understanding of themselves and their ability to discern what God might be calling them to do in their own context. The focus of my inquiry has shifted to be around what is a person's own sense of their purpose and mission and how is that changing as they grow in intimacy with God.

#### *4.4.3 A new model – the Christian Development Model*

My Christian perspective has underpinned my work and guided a journey of spiritual formation for the mentoree. Within my overarching intention of supporting spiritual development, I have drawn on the HDM as a helpful framework. JK affirmed that it was beneficial for him, and it enabled me to shape the flow of conversation through the SLJ process.

What I have learned is that the work of spiritual formation involves breaking through any barriers a person might have around their concepts of God, in order to develop intimacy with God. The barriers might come from any direction. When I attended a Leighton Ford Spiritual Mentoring Gathering in the USA in 2013, I was given a handout which identified three, inter-related life-long processes: Orthodoxy (the cognitive aspect of faith; faith as belief, what we believe and how we believe it - Thoughts); Orthopraxy (correct practice; the doing of meaningful critically determined action - Behaviours) and Orthopathy (right passions; relationships, desiring what God desires - Feelings). Woodbridge (2010 [online]) interprets these three areas as praise, action and passion and uses them to show the relationship between theology and everyday life. In addition to theology being lived individually, it also needs to be applied in the world, something Hilborn (2015 [online]) identified as activism in his list of the characteristics of evangelicalism.

Whilst spiritual formation is inter-related, I find it difficult to categorise it neatly. The shaping of a person seems messier; it involves weaving being and doing together and the alignment stems from a direct, personal relationship with God. The HDM creates space for people to locate their concerns in a way that is meaningful for them which is one reason why it engages people. Alongside being and doing, the HDM depicts tensions between spiritual inspiration and reality, and between self and others. As I assess the meaning that is emerging from this research, alongside the content, I have also reflected on the process of using the HDM. Taking the areas JK felt were important, the ones which emerged from the SLJ process, I now consider how his learning might be of general significance to others.

JK had found that, by undertaking the SLJ process, he had come to look at five different aspects of his Christian life through a balanced approach which had contributed to his spiritual development. These five areas were: church, faith, personal purpose and mission discerned through use of scripture, call to adventure underpinning leadership, and difficulty and struggle. I think the five areas can fit broadly into the HDM and so I have attempted to reframe it to include them. I did this to investigate how the HDM might reflect my Christian perspective. Such theological analysis has given me assurance that the model can be interpreted through the lens of the Bible. This has been an important consideration for me as it affects my desire to continue to use the model to support spiritual formation in the future.

The five areas are summarised, and linked to sections of the HDM (in brackets) below:

*1: Considering Church (Unity)* – the foundation of the kingdom of God, a community where truth can be encountered and an ideal world of peace, love and compassion can begin to be seen. I attempted to encourage JK to engage more fully in the life of the church. Although the church was problematic for JK he did acknowledge how beneficial it was as a support mechanism.

*2: Examining Faith (Inspirational Centre)* – the active working of the Holy Spirit in our lives enables us to find, receive and experience the love of God. This happens in a paradoxical world where understanding about spiritual reality differs; the HDM expresses this as tension between inspiration and reality. The objective Christian belief is that a relationship with Jesus Christ is necessary and can be nurtured to overcome sin, and anything that separates us from the love of God.

*3: Discerning personal purpose and mission (Becoming Self) through the use of scripture* – the, subjective personal nature of character transformation and choice to live a life aligned with

God's love. A particular scripture did match to JK's sense of call. This was a significant insight from our work together, which energised JK and indicated that God was speaking to him whilst he was involved in the SLJ with me.

*4: Calling to adventure (Expressing Potential)* – God's call potentially underpins leadership as we live courageously. As we experience freedom we impact the lives of others which can help to liberate them.

*5: Difficulty and struggle (Service to Others)* – Struggle is part of the spiritual life. Relationships are often the impetus and provide the opportunity to learn how to give love; self-giving love can include service to others in many guises, one of which is to act as a catalyst for new conversations.

I subsequently reordered the five areas above (numbered 1-5) as I worked out how they fit within the HDM.<sup>47</sup> I explain my thinking below, underlining the key concepts that stand out in my revised model (see Figure 8). Faith (number 2 above) foregrounds the centre of the model *inspiration*; it is directly concerned with God's presence in the life of a believer through the work of the Holy Spirit. The object of faith, the love and grace of God, are central to inspiration and provide a basis for us to grow in faith, freedom, truth, and love. However faith is also subjective, involved in understanding our purpose (number 3 above), faith is nurtured through our choice to yield to God and thus is linked to the way we *develop and become more fully ourselves*. Spiritual formation is about being re-made in the image of Christ, we need to be open to the transformation that can happen as we prioritise God. Scripture reading is an important ingredient within such transformation. Acting on our personalised call is an adventure (number 4 above) with God as it may require courage to experience greater freedom in Christ; *the expression of our potential* may or may not involve a movement towards leadership. Encountering God's love and accepting God's call puts us into the body of Christ, the living church (number 1 above), in which we fellowship together under the sovereign rule of God, and grow in our experience of *unity* and belonging together; God's kingdom is an emerging truth. In our everyday lives we are in many different situations and relationships. Our experiences, including times of difficulty and struggle (number 5 above), can help us learn to express love to our neighbour; our *loving service to others* can take many forms, we may be catalysts for spiritual conversations alongside doing good deeds. NB: In my revised model I have portrayed *reality* as encompassing both a vision of the glory of God as well as recognition

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<sup>47</sup> In practice, exploration of the HDM can start at any place within it.

of the existence of evil. Both are part of the spiritual realities that we struggle with in this world.

I have assessed how these five areas can be linked to scripture. Tang (2015b [online]) points out that, 'The chief means of spiritual formation is by studying and meditating on the scriptures' (Tang, 2015b, p.2 [online]) and emphasises the work of Mulholland (1985) when he states, 'The centrality of the Bible is regarded as the foundation for spiritual formation' (Mulholland, 1985, p.6). Hoare (2015) and Rohr (2007) made similar points. I have reframed the HDM, as Figure 8 shows, to begin to demonstrate how scripture can be taken into account through the use of particular biblical verses. This is not a comprehensive assessment of how the model can be used from a Christian perspective, but has established for me a root system, confirming that the model can be used to support growth in Christ.

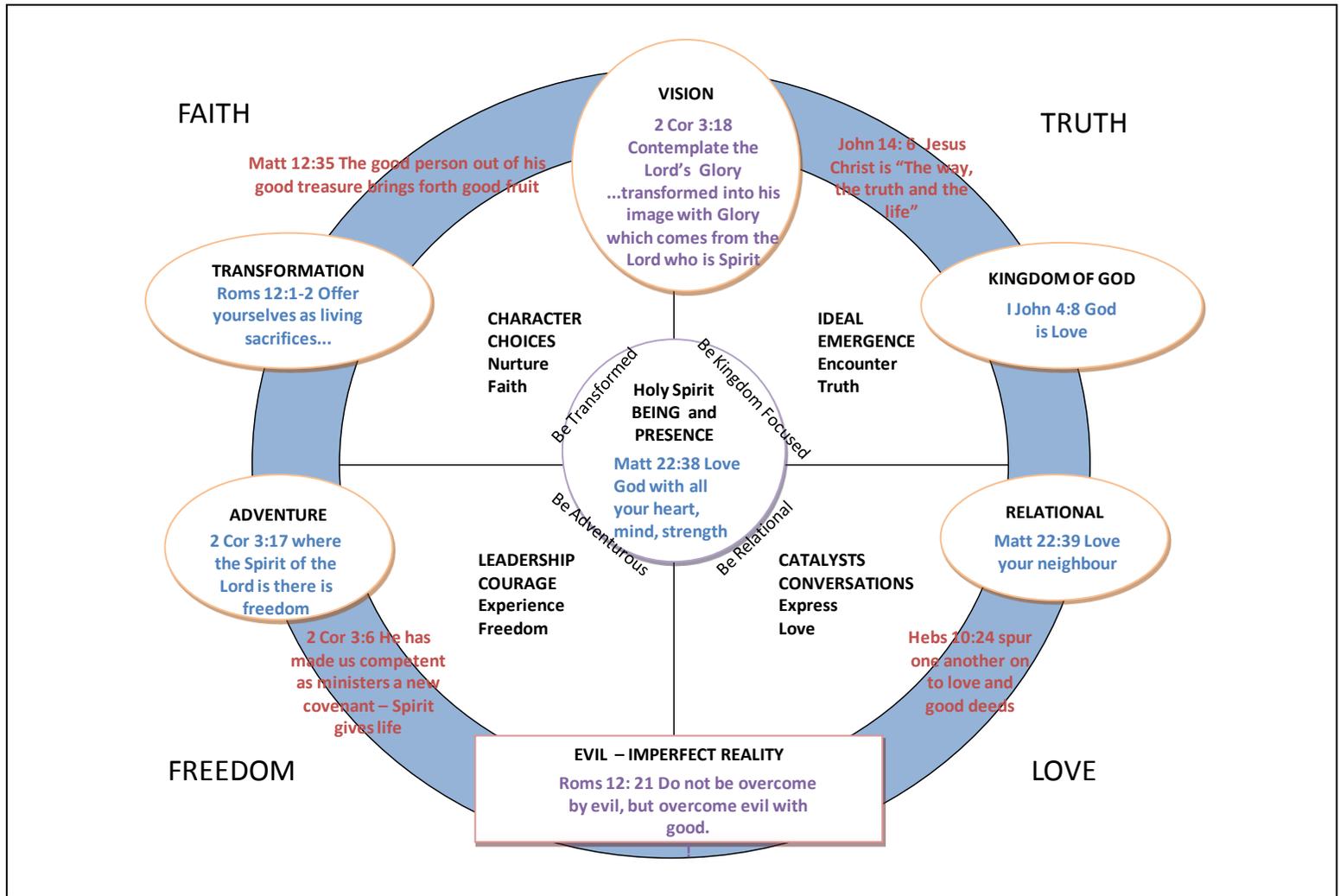


Figure 8: The Christian Development Model©

#### **4.5 Summary of learning and next research cycle**

By naming myself, explicitly, as a Christian spiritual mentor I am acting with integrity within the field of SAW. Spiritual mentoring is a vocation, a call on my life, where my inner and outer worlds meet. I understand that spiritual mentoring can enable spiritual formation, and that my life choices and experiences have supported me to become capable at it; consequently I have grown in confidence about who I am and what I do. Encouragingly, people have been attracted to work with me, although I still feel I need to continue to develop my ability.

I used the HDM as the foundational tool of my SLJ process, which JK found valuable. I have learned from this that I do not need to cram in extra resources and materials, but rather to incorporate prayer and create space to listen. In my approach to spiritual formation, it still takes courage for me to invite God's presence, but I have experienced how praying creates a better space for holy listening and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. By focusing on God as the inspirational centre, I have considered how the HDM can be interpreted from a Christian perspective and subsequently developed a new model which incorporates scripture.

I understand that spiritual formation is not all about individuals but sits in the wider backdrop of the Christian community and biblical revelation. My research has helped me to become re-acquainted with the importance of church in shaping the lives of believers. The church community provides a context for speaking about the kingdom of God freely; people gather together especially to hear from God; to be taught and to learn from the Bible; to stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit; and to be strengthened in faith. Accountability stems from the church, and consequently I have genuinely deepened my commitment to my own church life. I am rooted in the Christian community, which has helped me as I hear God speaking to me through the preaching, fellowship and prayers.

My focus on spiritual formation in relation to work has been referred to, by a member of the pastoral team, as my ministry, and through this recognition I have been able to serve within the church. In 2014 I was invited by St Albans Vineyard Church to organise a faith in the workplace network. This has become a connect group which meets in my home to share work life, reflect on scripture and pray together. What has struck me is the hunger Christians have to explore work-related themes. With my long-seated involvement in, and passion for SAW, it has been very fulfilling to host a space where Christians can talk about faith and work.

My focus on spiritual mentoring is an evolving sphere of activity, my own adventure in leadership. I have supported spiritual formation in relation to work in different ways than I had anticipated - mainly through work on a one-to-one basis mentoring Christian leaders, although I have also assisted small groups of people. Through both individual and group approaches I have sought to empower people to move towards greater intimacy with God, to strengthen their identity in Christ and to help them to live out their unique kingdom purpose. I have come to see my work as being more about faith than about leadership; leadership may result, but faith is the more important part.

In the final SLJ session JK concluded that by 'being who you are' Christians can show faith in the workplace. I wondered if this is really the best way to convey the value of Christian spirituality in relation to work. Finding fee-paying clients has been a challenge for EPICC, and for me, and so questions about how to address spirituality in work contexts has been difficult to investigate. However, in the next chapter, I am able to share learning from EPICC's first fee-paying client A Christian Charity (ACC). JK and I were invited to create a workshop for them around faith and leadership. It seemed an ideal opportunity and my case study about it forms the basis of research cycle four which is explored in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: FAITH IN RELATION TO WORK**

### **5.1 Overview of Chapter 5**

My first three research cycles, conducted through work with my EPICC colleagues, inquired into our shared interest in spirituality and faith in relation to work. Research cycle one investigated: Topic 1 - the nature of transformation, which led me to explore my Christian perspective and enabled me to identify myself as an evangelical Christian; Topic 2 – whether spirituality needs to be explicitly Christian, which enabled me to explore the grace of God; and Topic 3 – the impact of Christian spirituality on our consultancy ideas, which led me to consider how resistance to change may be a form of sin. My second and third research cycles investigated: Topic 4 – spiritual mentoring and spiritual formation, addressed through an examination of my capability as a spiritual mentor with one person in order to assess how I might enable spiritual formation. Topic 4 encompassed exploration of the five areas of: church, faith, scripture and its use in discerning purpose, adventure in relation to leadership, and acknowledged that difficulty and struggle are part of the spiritual journey. Exploring these areas has led me towards a deeper appreciation of theology and to understand that faith is of greater significance to me than leadership. It also led me to reframe the HDM from a Christian perspective.

The work undertaken in the early research cycles was fairly straightforward; I encountered little opposition since I was exploring topics of mutual interest with people of a similar orientation. The real challenge to my Christian perspective lies in how it might impact work contexts. Research cycle four, examined in this chapter, consists of a workshop facilitated by JK and myself with A Christian Charity (ACC), a fee-paying client. I wrote a case study of it and gained permission from the client to use it as part of my research investigation. My analysis of the case study is shown through Topic 5 - a Christian application of leadership, in relation to the ACC case study. The client context provides a rich opportunity to explore faith, and its association with leadership, in work; my study enabled me to consider some of the complexity within faith and spirituality. This chapter presents insights into how my faith impacts my work as a consultant when I examine questions of faith and leadership in a client organization.

My inquiry into my Christian faith and its impact on my working life has driven my thesis. The ACC case study shows the challenges and difficulties JK and I encountered, as we attempted to put our ideas into practice. By sharing our story I show how I experienced a tension between my understanding of my Christian faith, and my ability to live it out through my consultancy

practice. This story also provides a lived example of the tension that the HDM depicts between being and doing, indicating the relevance of the model to exploring issues of faith and spirituality. In addition, the case study demonstrates action research, as in action research terms<sup>48</sup> the exploration of how to live out one's faith in practice is as true for *me* (myself), as for *us* (my EPICC colleagues) and *them* (the ACC). To analyse the case study I have drawn on some elements of an autoethnographic approach, which I explain below (see section 5.2). Adopting such an approach conveys that the nature of my personal inquiry, and sense making process, is embedded in the process of trying to understand the ways in which faith might be active at work. My own attempts to understand may possibly be replicated in the struggles others have as they also grapple with how faith might be active in work.

## **5.2 A note about research analysis method for Research Cycle 4**

As part of my sense making process I want to clarify that this chapter has been written at the end of my thesis writing up phase, five years after the event took place, and so my reflections are at some distance from the data generation. The writing process itself has shifted my lines of inquiry and I have taken a heuristic<sup>49</sup> approach, which Flanagan (2008) explains encompasses both the activity, and principle, of discovering. As a researcher, I have been 'open to being guided into initially unrecognised directions and sources of meaning' (Flanagan, 2008, p.205). I have returned repeatedly to the data in order to move beyond first impressions, and in an effort to grasp salient insights. Flanagan notes 'the suitability of heuristic inquiry for exploring issues in contemporary spirituality' (Flanagan, 2008, p.206) to discover what is new when researching previously un-researched phenomena and experiential reality. She links heuristic inquiry particularly with ethnography,<sup>50</sup> a defining feature of which is that it is concerned with 'the ordinary and everyday' (Flanagan, 2008, p.207) and involves studying people in their own environment. By becoming involved with the client's work environment, and exploring faith at work issues, I consider that my approach was ethnographical, and it was possible for me as a researcher to gain a cultural understanding of myself in connection to others in society.

I have also been drawn to the use of self-reflective writing which has helped me to be reflexive about my personal experience. Wall (2006) who advocates that *ethnography* can be

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<sup>48</sup> As explained in chapter 1.6.

<sup>49</sup> Heuristic means enabling a person to discover or learn something for themselves.

<sup>50</sup> Ethnography means a description of everyday people and culture.

combined with *autobiography* as a legitimate research approach (becoming *autoethnography*) conveys the significance that such reflection offers:

the freedom of a researcher to speak as a player in a research project and to mingle his or her experience with the experience of those studied is precisely what is needed to move inquiry and knowledge further along. If a researcher's voice is omitted from a text, the writing is reduced to a mere summary and interpretation of the works of others, with nothing new added.

(Wall, 2006, p.3)

She continues:

New epistemologies [such as autoethnography] allow for the production of new knowledge by a unique and uniquely situated researcher, and offer small-scale knowledge that can inform specific problems and specific situations.

(Wall, 2006, p.3)

Whilst my approach is not entirely autoethnographic, I have been influenced by this method as it has helped me to value my experience as a legitimate source of research into faith at work, and of as much value as the participants' experiences. This is important since the subject of the inquiry is about faith, and hence my own faith perspective is part of the research inquiry.

### **5.3 A re-orientation of myself within the Faith at Work movement**

Because I am examining my data retrospectively, and because this chapter returns to a focus on *faith in work*, it is helpful to refresh some aspects of the SAW field. Miller (2007b) in his volume *God at Work* (2007b, p.14-17) suggests that SAW is interchangeable as a name with that of Faith at Work<sup>51</sup> (FAW). He conveys the historical basis of the overall movement identifying aspects that have influenced it as three waves.<sup>52</sup> These incorporate: the

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<sup>51</sup> Miller suggests that FAW encompasses the full range of SAW names. 'Each name, with [...] minor or subtle linguistic differences [...] points to significant differences in ethical orientation, theology or practical implications'. He suggests that selecting a name for the movement is a tradeoff between specificity and vagueness given the wide theological diversity in the movement. When moving from the general to the particular each word has different theological emphases. He argues that faith is the most helpful umbrella term (Miller, 2007b, p.14-15).

<sup>52</sup> *Wave one*: From 1850 Protestant postmillennial thought considered how Christ's kingdom on earth could be demonstrated through attention to such areas as economic justice, and anti-slavery measures. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII issued a social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (The Condition of Labour) which examined the social problems arising from changes in science, industry, agriculture, philosophy, political thought and city life. It represents a symbolic beginning date of wave one of the FAW movement where 'the compartmentalization of faith and work into separate domains [...] became the norm' (Miller, 2007, p. 26-27). Wave one had three broad streams of activity: the Social Gospel, special-purpose groups, and the popularization of Jesus (through books such as Sheldon's *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* published in 1896).

*Wave two*: The shift from wave one to two occurred after World War Two and was identifiable as lay-spawned and lay-led organizations and a broad level of grassroots activity; the beginning of the enlargement of a sense of Christian vocation where people in various groups came to look upon their work as a holy calling. This Miller writes about as 'The Ministry of the Laity Era' (Miller, 2007b, p.36). It

development of the social gospel; the ministry of the laity whereby people are called to be Christ's representatives in the world, and an overview of the recent FAW movement (which he dates as being from 1985 onwards). He also suggests that the response of the church, and theological academics, has been lacking:

The FAW movement is a loosely networked group of individual and collective activity, reacting against the church's lack of support for those called to a life in the marketplace, and whose common drive is a deep desire to live a holistic life with particular attention to the integration of faith and work.  
(Miller, 2007b, p.21)

Part of the FAW integration is the linking together by evangelicals of evangelization and social concern (p.42) as Stott (1975) stated, 'The actual commission [referring to "the Great Commission", Matthew 28.19-20] must be understood to include social responsibility [...] Evangelism and social responsibility are inseparable' (Stott, 1975, p.23). Thus living a faith-filled life can be seen as including responsiveness to human need, and social transformation, alongside proclamation.

When it comes to proclamation, Anderson (1997) emphasizes its significance within contemporary evangelical theology. He highlights that what marks out evangelical theology as unique is not:

an exclusive claim to orthodoxy, biblical authority, or Christian experience. Rather what evangelical theologies hold in common is an expressed concern for these as essential elements of the gospel of Jesus Christ as a confession of faith, a standard for teaching, and a mandate for evangelization and mission to the world.  
(Anderson, 1997, p.484)

He draws on the work of theologian Thielicke (1908-1986), Thielicke firmly believed that 'proclamation must precede theology' (Anderson, 1997, p.488). This is because the gospel is 'the answer to the crises of life' (Anderson, 1997, p.488). Thielicke emphasized ethics as 'the primacy of Jesus Christ over all areas of Christian thought and life' (Anderson, 1997, p.488), and where 'a self-conscious evangelical commitment to the Christological and spiritual priority of God in human affairs' (Anderson, 1997, p.488) provides the only way out of the problems which pervade society. Having identified myself as an evangelical Christian, I realize that this is also my own underlying ethical outlook. And it has a significant impact on my work (as my examination of my ACC case study shows).

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was significantly influenced by the Vatican II council which affirmed the laity as having a special Christian ministry in the world.

*Wave Three:* From mid-late 1980's onwards, is where the paradigm of integrating FAW came to the fore.

Reading Miller (2007b) in the later stages of my research has become core to my growing realisation of the struggle which I have been in, and am in. Through his assessment of the FAW movement he has provided particular insights that are helpful to me:

- a. *Blurring of Christian distinctions*: 'By wave three [late twentieth century] confessional differences [between Catholic and Protestant distinctions] tended to blur [...] Such that participants in the movement pay little heed to Protestant-Catholic distinctions' (Miller, 2007b, p.5). Miller affirms the value brought to FAW inquiry from both Catholic (social teachings) and Protestant (reformed) teachings. Whilst I have been able to identify myself as an evangelical stemming from the Protestant (reformed) tradition, focusing on my church heritage has not been my primary interest, rather, as evidenced by my design of the SLJ spiritual formation process, I have drawn on various spiritual traditions to assist the cultivation of faith.
- b. *Integration is difficult*: Miller recognises that central to the FAW movement is the desire for integration, the desire to integrate 'one's personal faith teachings with one's professional work responsibilities' (Miller, 2007b, p.6). This key thread, the joining together of personal transformation with social action issues, has been something I have been deeply aware of but which Miller names as having been problematic; Christians have 'struggled to integrate the claims of their faith with the demands of the commercial world' (Miller, 2007b, p.57). Just naming this as a struggle helps me to see that maybe there is no single *right* orientation to faith and work, the area I am exploring is genuinely problematic, and as such it is no wonder at times I have felt a bit lost as I have attempted to work in it.
- c. *FAW is about transformation*: Miller writes about this in terms of FAW participants who focus on the personal, 'transforming the individual' (Miller, 2007b, p. 25) and those who focus on 'transforming society' (Miller, 2007b, p. 24). In highlighting the work of Rauschenbush (1906), a leading Social Gospel figure, Miller emphasises that the focal point of FAW is on a 'new kind of layman' who will 'carry the determination to live consecrated lives into the workshop and office [and revolutionise] the conduct of business in which they are engaged' (Miller, 2007b, p.29). What Miller makes clear is that both individual and social transformation aspects are needed, and I can see that in my work with the HDM and JK this is the territory I have been exploring.
- d. *Church and Theological Academy are lacking*: Miller recognises there has been a lack of theological education (he describes there being a paucity of scholarly study of the FAW movement) and church support for the FAW (which he says has been little

recognized or nurtured in the church or the academy) and this led him to see that the area actually has the potential to 'reenergize the church itself' (Miller, 2007b, p.7). He claims that the institutional church has typically tried to draw lay people into fuller participation of church activities, and has simultaneously critiqued the marketplace negatively (p.57). Feeling a lack of support from church and theology lay people have pursued 'questions about meaning, purpose, ethics and how to express one's faith at work' (Miller, 2007b, p.61) through the FAW movement, guided by lay-authored books. This aligns with my experience and that of JK. My thesis, in general, is an attempt to bridge the gap between church, theology and work life.

- e. *Discipleship and small groups:* Miller identified the work of Shoemaker, who set up small groups under the name of FAW to support lay people, as being 'in many ways [...] the prototype for much of [wave three] of the FAW movement' (Miller, 2007b, p.32). The recognition here is that small group work (such as my own faith in the workplace connect group mentioned at the end of Chapter 4), is a central means to support FAW. Small group meetings, which are shaped within a community context, resonate with the understanding that all Christians form part of the body of Christ, such meetings enable exploration of discipleship, and can deepen understanding of how to follow Jesus. Miller also writes that 'lay ministry is arguably a classic interpretation of Christian discipleship' (Miller, 2007b, p.60). Both features have strengthened clarity for me around how the church, as a body of believers and disciples, lives out the faith journey. What I now appreciate more fully is the community aspect of sharing the faith journey together is part of what it means to be a disciple.
- f. *Use of scripture:* A feature of the small group prototype is the varied ways in which it can be led and managed typically by lay people, and including sharing, teaching, scripture, and prayer to provide both support and challenge. This is something I am doing, and can continue to do.

The main emphasis for Christians stemming from FAW is integration and the seeking of 'practical guidance on how to express the gospel through their jobs and organizations' (Miller, 2007b, p.53). This is the area which my case study examines. Miller writes:

The quest for integration avoids the naïveté of expecting the kingdom of God to be realised here on earth, but it also rejects the alternative extreme of despair and cynicism. The quest for integration seeks to approximate wholeness and balance while

recognising the difficulty of attaining it. It knows the reality of sin, yet it hopes for sanctification and transformation in light of salvation promises.  
(Miller, 2007b, p.74)

JK and I set out broadly in line with these intentions and our case study provides some insights into the 'difficulty of attaining it'.

#### **5.4 Making sense of the data – Research Cycle 4**

Chapter 2 introduced, and summarized, my ACC case study. The full case study, (see Appendix 1) presents the story of EPICC's first client work. JK and I were approached by a business school to facilitate a masterclass for one of their clients, ACC. The business school asked us to deliver 'something on faith and leadership'. The event took place in November 2011<sup>53</sup> after which I wrote the case study to capture learning. It was shared with the ACC sponsors, who approved it as an accurate record and gave me permission to use it for my research.<sup>54</sup> The case study includes background context, how EPICC became involved, evidence of the original commissioning brief and how arrangements shifted prior to the event, a description of EPICC's design and planning process and how it was influenced by input from the creators of the HDM, my recollections of the delivery of the workshop, a review of the feedback, post-event discussions and an overall summary of learning.

Since the case study encompasses both descriptive narrative and personal learning reflections, I am using two alternate typefaces in the text below to distinguish these parts. The descriptive narrative is written in **Times New Roman 11 bold**, and my personal learning reflections written in the original case study are shown in *Times New Roman 11 italics*. In section 5.5 I use the case study to reflect on my final topic for analysis, Topic 5 - Christian applications of leadership in relation to the ACC case study. I explore five areas: Christian emphasis, leadership, language, inclusivity and my position.

#### **5.5 Topic 5: Christian applications of leadership in relation to the ACC case study**

##### *5.5.1 A Christian emphasis*

Appendix 1.4 contains my description of a critical conversation that occurred when JK and I, representing EPICC, met with people from the sponsoring client, and business school. I provide a couple of excerpts in order to draw out some key insights:

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<sup>53</sup> The workshop was planned and facilitated between session 2 and session 3 of the SLJ and so JK and I were at an early stage of our thinking and work together.

<sup>54</sup> To retain the anonymity of the client references to published works about the organization are anonymised.

**At the meeting, Sue talked through the overview and EPICC’s approach. The content was agreed as being necessary and suitable as ‘there was more interest in a Christian masterclass’ and the CEO of ACC -Y added that he wanted people to feel ‘challenged and slightly uncomfortable’ following their attendance at the workshop. There was some discussion of internal ‘wrestling with theology’ and the differences between evangelicals and [other Christians] as to what a Christian leader is, as well as acknowledgement that there were some leaders who did not have a personal faith. Therefore they determined that the question needing to be addressed was ‘what makes a good leader in a Christian organization?’ rather than ‘what makes a good Christian leader?’ The flyer was subsequently amended and replaced with the new question as its title. However, the content of the flyer, and therefore the workshop, was not seen at that point as needing to be revised or changed. (There was very little time to think it through given the imminent need to promote the event).**

Learning Reflection

*I was given an updated Leadership, Qualities and Skills framework at this meeting which had a number of overlaps with the HDM which I had proposed using so I felt that there was some common ground with their culture<sup>55</sup>. I also felt the meeting went really well – there seemed to be a lot of positive energy about the exploration of Christian faith and I came away confident that what EPICC could offer was very much aligned with their expressed wishes for the masterclass.*

**Sue’s booklet *The Inner Life of a Christian Leader* was agreed as being suitable as recommended reading and, given the time-frame, these were to be handed out at the event.**

Learning Reflection

*The booklet entitled ‘The Inner Life of a Christian Leader’ (Howard & Blakeley, 2010) is overtly Christian and the acceptance of it as a suitable text to provide within ACC was further affirmation of the interest in exploring faith based leadership.*

(Appendix 1.4)

These excerpts reveal that clarity about the Christian position was not clear within the client context, and demonstrates how one Christian organization was struggling to make sense of the practice of faith and leadership. This lack of clarity was an early sign of what proved to be the main challenge for us, and the organization, on the day of the masterclass. I had come away from the meeting with the CEO and others feeling affirmed and positive about EPICC’s potential contribution to the organization. We had been invited to do the work because the business school had not found anyone else who was integrating faith and work in the way EPICC proposed. ACC had liked our flyer and our Christian approach. Yet the differences within the organization regarding faith and no-faith participants made it difficult for them to unpack the question ‘what makes a good leader in a Christian organization?’ Was the emphasis to be on being a *good leader* or on being a *Christian* organization? This was the fundamentally difficult issue that needed to be resolved. At the meeting JK and I did not adequately question the organization, with regard to its own internal understanding, due to time constraints in the

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix 3 for a comparison between the client’s framework and the HDM, and Appendix 4 for a summary sheet I created which shows how the client’s ‘personal leadership qualities’ map onto the HDM.

meeting, access issues, and probably a lack of confidence on our part around challenging the commissioning process. This coupled with subsequent changes in the size of group, the process for selection of participants and in our approach to the delivery caused the workshop to become problematic.

It is helpful to examine the historical Christian emphasis within the organization. ACC's history stems from having been a religiously motivated 'special purpose group' (Miller, 2007b, p.30) which originally set out to bridge the gap between church and world. It therefore had an explicitly Christian heritage. Miller emphasised that such groups:

did at least as much to reach, teach, and transform the average person's view of faith [...] as did the clergy and theologians who led the Social Gospel and early ecumenical movements. Special purpose groups [...] for all their theological simplicity and occasional imbalance knew how to organise, communicate, and sustain the energy of their organization.  
(Miller, 2007b, p.37)

Essentially the organization had previously demonstrated strong Christian leadership skills. After the workshop, one of the participants sent me a research paper which showed how the organization had been founded on a strongly evangelical ethos and 'had in mind conversion to Christ as a primary part of [its] mission.'<sup>56</sup>

Over time the organization had moved away from its evangelical roots and there was an ongoing internal dialogue about the Christian nature of the organization, which we as EPICC had not been alerted to in any detail. We learned, subsequently, that the internal conversation had been going on for decades. There was tension between those that wanted to continue to focus on the evangelical aims of the early founders, and those that saw the mission as being more to do with social action. There was a desire for the ACC to be an 'inclusive Christian movement'. ACC were grappling with how to develop a pattern of working that encompassed both social action, and provision for people to come into relationship with God through Jesus Christ, without discriminating against those of other faiths and of no faith. In ACC, things were further complicated as some within the movement recognised the significance of Christian faith, whilst others did not.

Miller (2007b) draws attention to the Christian perspective as encompassing both transcendence (conservative Christians who accent winning souls for Christ) and immanence

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<sup>56</sup> I cannot cite this paper as it would destroy the anonymity of the case study. The paper was a Master's dissertation written for an MA in Pastoral Theology and Chaplaincy.

(liberal Christians who emphasise lay obligations to social causes). Miller cites Butt (1978) to argue that this either-or conundrum is a false choice for laity and that ‘transcendence and immanence as they affect Christian discipleship are inseparably linked’ (Miller, 2007b, p.55). This is similar to the awareness between liberal and conservative Christianity made by Paul (2016, see section 4.2.3). ACC demonstrated the reality of this continuum between both aspects of faith in a work setting. I have begun to appreciate more fully that how a person identifies themselves as Christian is of vital significance. What ACC were dealing with was their inability to chart their way through the complex waters of faith and everyday work life; they seemed to be looking for a solution. I think the solution lays in a deepening faith journey.

My analysis is helping me to see that I enter Christian organizations with an assumption that the formation of Christian identity, an aspect of the ongoing sanctification process, is central to resolving some of the faith in work tensions, particularly for those with leadership responsibility. My solution is that all one needs to do to develop as a Christian leader is to be a better Christian. However, being a good Christian does not necessarily mean one is a good leader so I need further clarity. My operating assumption became a question in the ACC work as the following section reveals.

### *5.5.2 Leadership and Christian Leadership*

In Appendix 1.8.4 I had begun to identify the core difficulty which became apparent during the work:

**There were clearly issues with the nature of ACC as a ‘Christian’ organization. The mix in the room between Christians and non-Christians was a significant factor in levels of engagement. The question ‘what makes a good leader in a Christian organization?’ remains un-resolved for the ACC. The feedback (see Appendix 1.8.4) captured some of the tension [...] The range of different perspectives made it difficult to engage with this at an appropriate level for everyone in the room. An important element of tension, and a possible future aim for work in this area, was expressed in the expectations, as:**

- **Exploration of leadership in a Christian organization in the context of ACC’s inclusive practice, people of all faiths and none, are welcome and active in the movement.**
- **Chance for people to reflect on why they work for a Christian organization and what individually they can offer to understanding of the Christian ethos.**
- **I hoped it would engage us with how all leaders, people of faith and not, lead and lead well in a Christian organization.**
- **(We need to) keep pushing the notion that the answer lies in Christians and non-Christians finding a new place, new language, new understanding.<sup>57</sup>**

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<sup>57</sup> This is a statement which appears to be inclusive, however it is confusing to unravel. In this thesis I have shown that the specifics of the Christian faith and of the situation do matter. I explore the option of new language further in section 5.5.3.

**It is the nature of inclusivity which emerged as being a bone of contention for leaders in the room with Evangelical Christians and non-Christians [representing the] polarity around this issue [...] (see Appendix 1.8.4 for the detail). The difficulty is partly also around the comprehension of the word ‘Christian’ which can mean different things to different people. One person expressed their awareness of this complexity ‘it was a little exclusive – no appreciation of the range of positions on a Christian journey’. Leadership is also a very broad and hard to define concept – between the two, there is a wealth of potential misunderstanding! The challenge was summed up in one comment, ‘This was a difficult and challenging subject’. And a useful question emerged, ‘Is the best way to be/lead a Christian organization really to be a better/more thoughtful Christian?’<sup>58</sup>**

Learning Reflection

*[...] the ACC is full of paradox. From a very explicit Christian foundation, it has morphed into a large, global, association of people who share similar values but not necessarily arriving at those values as a result of faith. So the question about ‘good leadership’ remains values driven and depends on the interpretation each leader has about what it means to be a Christian organization. [...] There are many generic, and context specific, interpretations of good leadership – but when it is within a Christian environment another dimension is also present, that of how a relationship with God is enacted. Because of the historical and ongoing ethos this dimension needs to be incorporated within the life of the organization somehow.*

(Appendix 1.8.4)

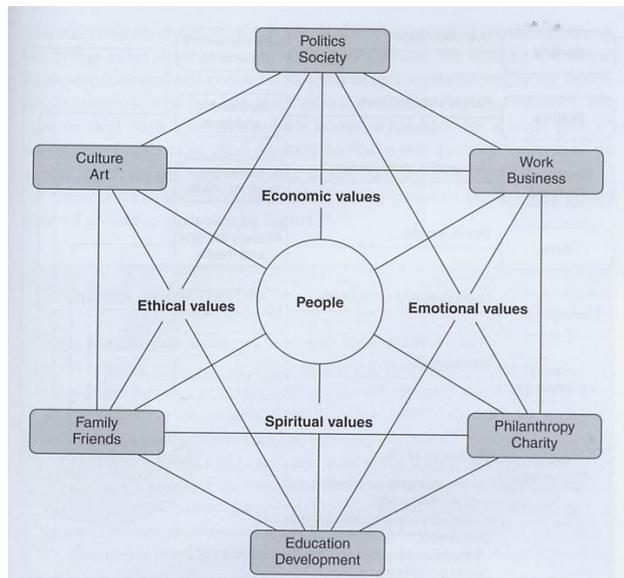
My second area of exploration is that of leadership in general and Christian leadership in particular. Leadership is a vast field of study which I have been informed about through my experience of working to support leadership development, alongside input from academics and practitioners. The complex, multi-disciplinary, nature of leadership development is addressed through examination of different perspectives, theories, and research (Kippenburger, 2002). It covers many strands of activity ranging from global politics and social responsibility (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 1999, Wheatley, 2005), and specific skill expertise (Badaracco, 2002, Collins, 2001, Kotter, 2001 [online]), as well as individual personal development (Bennis, 1999). It is not simple to identify what constitutes good leadership. Leadership can be framed individualistically and related to achieving organizational goals, and yet the moral value of the goals themselves can be questioned. Leadership is embedded in wider social contexts and there is a two-way movement since leaders are both shaped by, and shape, their environments.

Raich and Dolan (2008) map a variety of influences upon individuals (see Figure 9) to depict the broad, holistic and systemic environment in which leadership identity is shaped (formed). They incorporate some of the macro elements such as education, culture and politics as well as showing that people are also shaped in community by family, friends and charity work. Raich

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<sup>58</sup> Here is the question that emerged in relation to my own faith stance, I feel my influence had led the group to articulate this assumption.

and Dolan imply that the wider context influences, and is influenced by, the economic, ethical, emotional and spiritual values people hold. Their holistic presentation indicates why leadership is a complex field of study:



**Figure 9: The holistic view of people,  
Raich and Dolan, 2008, p.89**

Since all formative relationships, and actions, around the work environment shape the whole person, Raich and Dolan argue that the requirements, needs, and wishes of the key stakeholders in an organization can be understood only by taking a holistic view of their situation, not simply an economic view.

Peter Drucker (see Kurzynski , 2009) emphasized the social and moral responsibilities of organizations and leaders in two ways. Firstly, the leader or manager as a whole person:

someone with values, responsibilities, their qualifications and development as a human being [whose work] has far-reaching impact on the development and well-being of the people who work in the corporation.  
(Kurzynski, 2009, p.360)

And secondly, the:

organization as a whole – consisting of the “business” existing as a “human/social organization” responsible for developing the people employed by it, and as a “social institution” with responsibilities to the society in which it operates [...] Drucker aligned with professional responsibility the duty to act with integrity, exercise sound judgment and courage.  
(Kurzynski, 2009, p.360)

Bennis (1999) similarly acknowledges judgment, and adds the concept of character, when he brings to the fore some of the depth behind leadership concepts, ‘in tomorrow's world

exemplary leaders will be distinguished by their mastery of the softer side: people skills, taste, judgment, and, above all, character' (Bennis, 1999, p.18-19).

Leadership can thus be framed as a moral endeavour encompassing some sizeable areas of concern such as identity, integrity, judgment, courage and character. These areas provide valuable reference points for thinking about what good leadership might include, but begs the question how are such qualities developed? This topic was recently explored by Seijts *et al* (2015) who recognized that while leaders may agree character matters it is seldom talked about. Reasons for this include ambiguity about what is meant by character, which of its dimensions are important to leadership, how it can be assessed and developed, as well as a lack of contemporary language to speak about character. The authors recognise that character influences the choices people make about what to do in organizational life. They see character as an amalgamation of virtues, personality traits and values which include judgment, courage and integrity, but also drive, accountability, collaboration, humanity, humility, temperance, justice, and transcendence. These elements again show a holistic range of concerns, but now with a foundation of character as being essential to effective decision making and functioning.

When it comes to Christian leadership, Christians have a particular frame of reference, and sphere of activity, for discerning and judging how to direct people within their care, and how to view the areas of judgment, integrity, courage and character. Essentially, they need to find out what God wants rather than letting their own preferences set the agenda. ACC's various organizational vision and mission statements were explicitly Christian; so it seemed plausible that, as the organization had identified itself as Christian, its senior leaders would need to adapt their understanding of leadership around that premise. Yet, by addressing Christian leadership, rather than leadership in general, we stirred up repercussions from those who did not identify themselves as Christians. Whilst the evangelical leaders did seem to appreciate the spiritual battleground the ACC was in, as it wrestled with the interpretation and practice of theology, other leaders were resistant to the Christian focus in our session. The organization had internal issues of discernment and judgment about how to be present to the spiritual climate. In ACC leaders expressed a desire to 'be inclusive', and open to 'all faiths and none'; but lacked clarity about how to be a Christian organization, which therefore made leading it difficult. Criticisms of the masterclass conveyed to me an underlying assumption that there exists some kind of 'one size fits all' model of leadership which can be taught. There was insufficient appreciation of the complexity involved. I will deal shortly with the nature of

inclusivity, but first want to continue with my examination of leadership by exploring it within a specifically Christian discussion.

Paul (2016) points out that the word leadership is not a very biblical word; that the word 'leader' comes through German 'and has the underlying sense of determining a pathway' (Paul, 2016, p.4). He expands:

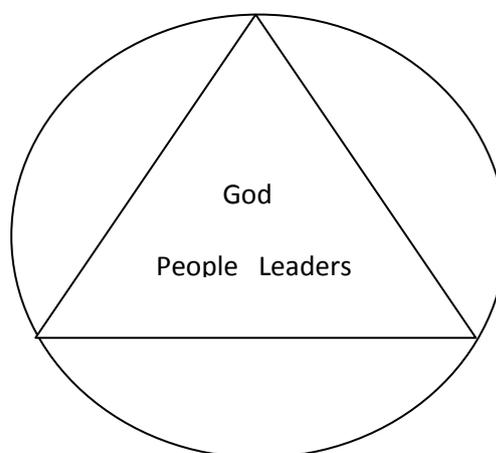
In both Testaments, leaders are often referred to by the metaphor of "shepherds". One of the key roles of a shepherd is to keep the sheep walking on a safe path. (Paul, 2016, p.4)

Similarly, the spiritual gift of leadership mentioned in I Corinthians 12.28 literally means the steering of a boat. Paul comments that:

it is striking that this gift is listed as one among many, and is not given prominence [and that] the New Testament avoids the usual terms for leaders when talking of leaders of the Christian community. (Paul, 2016, p.4)

He explains that Jesus forbids the use of the term rabbi (translated as teacher or leader) since 'we have one teacher' (Paul, 2016, p.5) and references Higton and Alexander's (2015 [online]) report on *Senior Church Leadership* to recognise that a church leader needs to 'deflect attention back to the Lord of the church' (Paul, 2016, p.5).

Higton and Alexander present a triangular understanding of leadership within the specifically Christian community (see Figure 10, where the triangle represents the church and the circle represents the world). The diagram shows that 'both the leader and the community depend on the call of God for their self-understanding and their identity' (Paul, 2016, p.5). In this way God calls his people; and God calls individuals to lead his people. The emphasis is on the body of Christ, having different gifts, working together in the gospel mission.



**Figure 10: Triangular Dynamic of Church Leadership, adapted from Higton and Alexander, 2015, p.23 [online]**

The thought that focus on leaders and leadership is not a healthy approach is a point made by Nielson (2004) who sees that such terms create hierarchical structures and confers powerful privileges to a few. Higton and Alexander convey that 'God's defining action is central to the task of understanding New Testament visions of leadership' (Higton and Alexander, 2015, p.25 [online])<sup>59</sup> which means that Christians must look to God first, and context and task only in light of that priority. They describe how the New Testament church:

does not provide a single model of leadership. Instead it provides us with a fluid picture of ongoing adaption, in which the divisions of ministry tasks between people and leaders [...] were re-negotiated in the light of changing circumstances and developing understanding, as was the nature of the task itself.  
(Higton and Alexander, 2015, p. 50)

Whilst Higton and Alexander's (2015 [online]) report focuses on ways in which senior leadership has come about in the church, it offers useful ways of thinking about leadership in all Christian contexts. It is possible to take away some guiding principles, but this has to be coupled with recognition of the unique differences inherent in a particular situation.

Leadership is:

developed in situ, hammered out in context by Christians drawing deeply on the Scriptures, engaging with the tradition, attending to their situations, questioning and challenging, and discovering prayerfully over time what bears fruit and what does not.  
(Higton and Alexander, 2015, p.7 [online])

The authors recognize leadership does have some generic features, such as: strategy - being clear about vision, mission and purpose of the organization, and also aspects of practical management – capacity to motivate and inspire people, and generate enthusiasm towards action. Leaders can be seen to be people who can inspire, encourage and sustain people (p.9), and leadership is a useful term for naming the many skills of negotiation, consultation and organization (p.68) which leaders need to know in order to argue their case, persuade and lead by example. But, they suggest, it is also vital to realize leadership involves flexibility in interpretation.

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<sup>59</sup> Higton and Alexander (2015, p.22, section 55 [online]), explain God's action in the world as follows: Rather than start with the church or its leaders, the pattern [...] starts with the action of God. It is God who calls and redeems a people to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19.6), and a light to the nations (Isaiah 49.6) – [...] it is also God who calls individuals to leadership [...], starting with Moses, who embodies the three strands [...] into kingly, priestly and prophetic leadership. Similarly, Jesus, the new Moses, is sent to be the pioneer (archegos) and shepherd of all God's people, embodying all three modes of leadership – but he also selects and calls a smaller group of disciples, sends them out and gives them authority to act in his name as his witnesses and surrogates. [...] the gifts of the Spirit are given to the whole church – but that gifting is expressed in individual charismata (including the gift of leadership) exercised within the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12.27–30; Ephesians 4.11–12).

Higton and Alexander's (2015 [online]) report emphasises the need for faithful improvisation, comparing leadership to musicianship, whereby:

[Those] who are deeply trained in a particular tradition (who know its constraints and possibilities in their bones) draw on all the resources provided by that formation to respond creatively to new situations and to one another. Compelling and faithful answers to [Christian] questions about leadership require something of the same deep formation and deep attentiveness in situ, and will be similarly diverse and creative. (Higton and Alexander, 2015, p.7-8 [online])

This corresponds with the recognition I have given to spiritual formation, and also illuminates an area that I think the ACC really needed to address - the hard work of understanding their own history, context and obligations to the call of God in their work. This applies to the individual leaders, as well as to the organization as it operates in different local areas. However, they had opted to outsource this work to us, and we were not well enough equipped at the level of detail to attend to their needs. Neither was a half day workshop the best format for addressing these concerns.

Whilst Christian leadership does have distinctives, Higton and Alexander (2015 [online]) recognise that the church has drawn on ideas of leadership from outside of itself:

it is clearly impossible to sustain a simple opposition between Christian and secular ideas of leadership. [The Anglican tradition] has always been in the business of assimilating and transforming material from the world around it. (Higton and Alexander, 2015, p.71 [online])

The church has modified its approach over time and used models of leadership which are appropriate for the social conditions in which it exists. The church has recognised it should not oversimplify its understanding of the world, but does need to find ways to engage with it appropriately. Higton and Alexander pick up on the areas of transformation and resistance that I have previously identified.

The only interesting questions are about the kind and depth of the transformation and the assimilation involved [...] we should not [...] assume any neat opposition between theological and secular, nor between traditional and innovative ideas of leadership. Rather we need to focus on the process of critical appropriation or negotiation [...] the process by which we bring all our [...] practices of leadership [...] before the God who calls us and commissions us, to be transformed and remade. After all "traditional" language and ideas can become a way of protecting ourselves against such necessary transformation, [and] new language borrowed from the wider world can distract us from it. (Higton and Alexander, 2015, p.72 [online])

By understanding that firstly there is no single template, process, strategy or formula that aids understanding of what a senior leader should do or be, and secondly that leadership can

emerge as an aspect of the Spirit’s work, it is possible to see that combining discussions of faith and leadership opens a wide avenue for seeing ways in which God might be at work through us. This is such an exciting territory. Dry discussions about leadership, regarding what it is or is not, can shift in unexpected ways as we open up to releasing the work of God’s Spirit in our lives.

### 5.5.3 Language

The subject of language provides a third avenue of exploration as it might help Christians and non-Christians to understand each other in fresh ways. The feedback contained the idea that, **‘(We need to) [sic] keep pushing the notion that the answer lies in Christians and non-Christians finding a new place, new language, new understanding’** (Appendix 1.8.4). This was one of the most constructive comments. What could this look like? Miller (2007b) recognised the power of language. He writes that language and word choice:

either [...] shut down or open up conversation [...] there are often linguistic and communication barriers between people of different faith traditions, as well as within the same faith tradition. These barriers also exist between theologians and business scholars, and between religious professionals and workplace professionals.  
(Miller, 2007b, p.125)

Miller proposes a conceptual framework, The Integration Box (see Figure 11), which shows various perspectives which people in FAW contexts, such as the ACC, might hold. It may be possible that The Integration Box, which suggests the four E’s of Ethics, Experience, Evangelism and Enrichment (Miller, 2007, p.126-127), can unlock some new understanding for Christians:

ET: Ethics	EX: Experience
EV: Evangelism (Expression)	EN: Enrichment

**Figure 11: The Integration Box, The Four E’s, adapted from Miller, 2007, p.127 and p.141**

The Integration Box represents an attempt to integrate faith and work, and reflects the reality that participants in the FAW movement exhibit varying and often multiple understandings and

expressions of integration. It is possible for people and groups to be located in one or more types. In brief, Miller (2007b) defines the types as follows:

*The Ethics Type:* give attention to virtue, business ethics, and questions of social and economic justice. They accent ethics and righteous living based on religious principles and right action. This can be applied at personal, corporate and societal levels and as such can influence understandings of business leadership. It can tend to miss out on 'the rich dimensions of a mature expression of faith identity' (Miller, 2007, p.132) and can lead to pride in thinking humanity 'can without error discern God's will' (Miller, 2007, p.132).

In the ACC social justice was a concern and the work there was oriented towards helping people in social deprivation and need.

*The Evangelism (Expression) Type:* give attention to helping others to develop a relationship with Jesus. Evangelism can be addressed through programmatic and structural means, in formal and informal ways. Miller regards evangelism as possibly being contentious since it may disrupt 'the basic functions, purpose, and responsibilities of the work at hand' (Miller, 2007, p.134) and those in the EV quadrant may 'minimize or neglect addressing other ethical issues and social injustices which are also central to full Christianity' (Miller, 2007, p.134). Miller suggests this type might be better named expression 'as that term allows for verbal and nonverbal forms of communicating the tenets of one's faith' (Miller, 2007, p.135) and can then include other religions and faith traditions, although he notes that Islam also emphasizes evangelism.

In the ACC there were certainly some who wanted the organization to encompass evangelism as it had done when it was founded.

*The Experience Type:* give attention to questions of vocation, calling, meaning and purpose within work:

Their view of work is that it has both intrinsic and extrinsic meaning and purpose [...] the particular work someone does [...] is of theological value. Work has the larger role of serving greater societal purposes and needs.  
(Miller, 2007, p.135)

This type takes account of people who question the value of their work and seek for meaning and purpose and as such finds 'easy connection points and common language with spiritual seekers and people of all faith traditions' (Miller, 2007, p.136). Emphasis on what we do and whether it is a calling can overshadow how we do it and who we are as people.

Within the ACC people may have been drawn to work there to serve and make a difference in the lives of the clients. However, it is not clear from my research that this was coupled with

them being identified as a 'spiritual seeker'. I could have done more using the HDM to identify this.

*The Enrichment Type:* give attention to personal and inward transformation through focus on issues such as healing, prayer, meditation, contemplative practices, consciousness, self-actualisation and fulfilment of human potential. This can encompass many religious strands, including New Age spirituality, and can focus on the benefits (health, wealth and happiness) that come from alignment with God's will. Concepts of sin, evil and the fallenness of the human condition are not emphasised, and ethics, justice and responsibility are not a primary focus. This can lead to a self-indulgent orientation towards relativism, denial of truth, and personal gain over community good.

Within the ACC, it is not clear from my research to what extent this type was present in the organization.

Miller's (2007) model shows some broad areas of inquiry and proposes that:

the integration of faith and work, when done in healthy, respectful and appropriate ways and with the recognition that we live and work in a pluralistic culture, is a good thing.

(Miller, 2007, p.141)

However, whilst such breadth may provide a possible means to investigate the question raised during the ACC work, that of how to be an inclusive Christian movement, it does not identify any clear solutions. The nature of Christian inclusivity has become my fourth area for exploration.

#### *5.5.4 Christian Inclusivity*

Brace (2008 [online]) argues that Jesus demonstrated inclusivity:

Let us rejoice [...] at the inclusive loving ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have a saviour who is not prepared to despise those whom others have despised but continually reaches out to the lost, the dispossessed and the broken of society.

(Brace, 2008, final paragraph [online])

But he also emphasises that 'none of this gives support to Liberalism which [...] is a different message and must be concluded [...] as plain heresy' (Brace, 2008, section 1, paragraph 7 [online]). Hyun (2011 [online]) recognises that Christianity is essentially an inclusive religion, since anyone can be a follower of Jesus. Yet at the same time it is also exclusive in that it aims to generate responsiveness to God's saving grace, and has truth claims about Jesus Christ that make it fundamentally different to other religions. The ACC can identify itself as a Christian organization because it stresses inclusivity, underpinned by a Christian foundation, and has

leaders within it who are convicted and motivated through their knowledge of the truth of Jesus. However, the inclusive nature of Christianity does imply responsiveness to the good news of Jesus, and those who are not yet responsive to the gospel message can feel excluded. Miller's (2007) Integration Box seems to highlight a tension, one that was seen in the ACC, between those who are EV types and those who might be in other areas of the box, or even outside the box.

Rahner (1986) presents an inclusivist position, as he considers that there are 'anonymous Christians' which means 'that a person lives in the grace of God and attains salvation outside of explicitly constituted Christianity' (Rahner *et al*, 1986, p.135). Rahner (1982) had previously suggested there is:

an innate desire for God at the heart of human nature. Even if this [is] partially experienced as an ineffable reality beyond that of language and perception, it [is] nevertheless a stirring of consciousness towards the divine, although it await[s] its ultimate apotheosis in the person and revelation of God in Christ. For everything human beings do [even their secular activity] in concrete freedom oriented to God, and open by God's grace upon immediacy to God, is free activity that is properly Christian [when rightly performed], and always and everywhere sanctified activity, activity with a sanctified meaning.

(Rahner, 1982, cited in Graham, Walton and Ward, (2005), p.150)

Rahner (1982) emphasised the power of divine grace as something universally given prior to a profession of faith. He considers that people are in relationship with God and express that relationship in action whether they are aware of it or not (see Matthew 25.31ff). In an organization such as ACC it is possible that those who work there, and who do not express faith, might be on a journey towards a full expression of faith, and that the working environment could be part of their formational experience.

The existence of other faiths and religions is more complicated for Christians, and whilst an investigation of different religions cannot be covered comprehensively here, it is important to recognize that a Christian perspective sits in the cultural context of a multi-faith society.

Williams (2012) has examined the value of religious pluralism in civil society. He wrote that there is some common ground in claims to knowledge of God since:

the sacred reality surrounding this universe is benign, that human beings have some share in, or natural capacity for knowing, the divine character, that meditative practice in silence and asceticism brings us closer to the divine and that universal compassion and the quest for universal justice is a natural expression and consequence of knowing the divine.

(Williams, 2012, p.129)

However, he clearly recognises that the narratives of origin, personal development and transformation are different within the different faiths and so the *reasons* for affirming universal truths and common wisdom will vary. He recognises that it is impossible to have an embodied practice outside of a religious tradition, and through an ability to respect the different maps, stories, rituals and truth claims that stem from historical and cultural roots, he places value on inter-religious dialogue. Drawing on Clooney (2010), Williams thinks a 'careful and attentive interaction between communities of religious practice' (Williams, 2012, p.131) can open up a space for comparing theology, and the possibility to learn what might serve the goal of spiritual maturity with those of different faith habits.

As I introduced in Chapter 1.4, Clooney (2010) proposed: 'acts of including' (Clooney, 2010, p.16). This involves:

engaging carefully and imaginatively with other voices and habits. It is a theology that still retains its fundamental understanding of how its own vision or world view is learned and how that learning is constantly reproduced in the believer's life, and it does not shrink from making claims for the truth of what is thus learned. But it also opens up new kinds of relations between the believer and the rites and stories of another faith – and with the persons who hold to another faith.  
(Williams, 2012, p.131-132)

This is not a theology of inclusivity at all costs; but it gives permission for believers to develop positive relations with those of other faiths and to share faith experiences with them. Williams (2012) articulates two mis-leading perspectives: the idea that any encounter between rival religions is a contest so that one of them can be regarded as ultimately true, and the belief that all religions are an expression of the same underlying convictions. Yet he signals his view of Christian truth:

this is not to abandon the claim that there is still one narrative that offers the comprehensive perspective in which others may most truthfully and rightfully be read.  
(Williams, 2012, p.132)

His point is that he holds civil society's ability to speak about truth in the highest regard. What I have learned from Williams is that Christian truth offers the most comprehensive perspective, but that it is helpful to engage, in a positive way, with those who adhere to a different faith. Not necessarily to convert them, or to agree with them, but for the sake of encouraging growth towards spiritual maturity.

Within the ACC it may be that their focus on social action over proclamation is a starting point for a positive conversation; it enables questioning of how the role of a leader may differ in different parts of their cultural system. Leadership is therefore personalized in that some

leaders may be drawn to support social action in line with Miller's (2007) ET, EN and EX aspects of supporting good work in community, whilst other leaders might operate more from Miller's EV base and create opportunities to expound on the Christian message. It is possible that different truth claims can be examined in the process of working on social action issues in an effort to develop greater understanding of who God is. All types of leader can be valuable to the organization. The question ACC may have needed to focus on is what is the purpose of their work as an organization? The devolved nature of their leadership structure seems to leave interpretation of purpose rather open to the perspective of individuals who have leadership responsibility.

#### *5.5.5 My position as a Christian consultant*

Given the limited impact of the masterclass, my fifth area for examination in relation to it, is that of my capability as a consultant. I note in the case study that the workshop can be reviewed and assessed using a variety of themes:

1. ***The masterclass concept - was it a helpful learning approach***
  2. ***The value of the theoretical content – receptivity to ideas***
  3. ***The value of the HDM – did people engage with it***
  4. ***The Christian emphasis – the ambiguity around interpreting what Christianity is and means for leaders***
  5. ***The contextualisation of the content for the audience***
  6. ***The facilitation style – presenter's capacity to deliver and enable learning***
- The workshop seemed to create extremes of response in some of these categories.**  
(Appendix 1.8)

I have addressed point 4 and to some extent point 1 above, as these were driven primarily by the organization, but points 2, 3 and 6 are about the content of the workshop and how it was delivered which was mainly down to myself and JK. I see point 6 as being very much affected by point 5. I consider these various points below.

#### *5.5.5.1 Theoretical content of the masterclass*

In retrospect the theoretical content seems acceptable, although I now question whether it was appropriate for the participants in their context; but mainly I think my delivery style was lacking. In debrief discussions it emerged that:

**those who had been present in the room from among ACC sponsors also did not think the event had been as poor as the feedback sheets seemed to indicate. They in fact thought the content was good. They felt that it was essentially the “wrong audience” in terms of the size, mix and timing**  
(Appendix 1.9)

In Slide 8 of my presentation (Appendix 7) I explained that spiritual formation is the foundation of good leadership, and how this is a holistic process which takes place in community. I have

not deviated from this view and hold it to be true, as do others. Miller (2007a) for example calls for spiritual formation and leadership to be integrated. Jackman (2015) draws on the book of Proverbs as a guide to encourage integrated thinking and leadership formation which encompasses a 'transcendental epistemology' (Jackman, 2015, p.243). Jackman writes that 'the way we speak about leadership development shapes leaders' (Jackman, 2015, p.231), and argues that business leaders and managers should adopt the term formation. Interestingly, he also advocates that leaders should have a mentor in order for leaders to have 'an open dialogue around integrity and ethics' (Jackman, 2015, p.239).

After the master class the internal sponsor had:

**suggested that there were some good things emerging. The masterclass had dealt with "the most significant topic", "head on". And the question what does it mean to be a Christian organization is important especially with the more inclusive acceptance of "all faiths and none". The event had generated internal conversations and was still being talked about'**  
(Appendix 1.9)

Whilst on the day things had seemed a bit bleak, the new Director for Spiritual Development asked to meet up with me afterwards to go over some of the issues that arose, and which he was confronted with on a day-to-day basis in the organization. He subsequently invited me to work with him as his mentor and undertook the SLJ process with me. This work was better suited to my gifting and calling, and was of considerable benefit to him personally, in relation to his role within ACC. It confirmed that I did have a grasp of important leadership concerns from a Christian perspective. He commented:

I wonder how many other people at either of our churches immerse themselves in spiritual reflection, and agonise over how to follow Jesus in this life, to the extent that we do? But out of that comes leadership, because you've forged a path that few dare to tread, and you've therefore done the hard work for them, if they care to follow.  
(ACC Director for Spiritual Development, personal communication [E-mail], 2014)

There was one unusual aspect in the workshop which stemmed from my evangelical Christian faith perspective. While preparing the Power Point presentation I prayed and received a powerful image in my mind of the parable of the fig tree which did not bear fruit. The story can be found in Mark 11.13. I felt strongly that I should put this into my presentation, even though it was rather a confrontational biblical metaphor (see Appendix 7, Slide 7). From my evangelical position it seemed that the watering down of the organization from its strong Christian foundation meant it was not spiritually healthy, and that the leaders of the organization had a responsibility around this. In writing my presentation notes I had drawn on

Quaker influences (the inscription on George Fox's memorial tablet) to emphasise the need for integrity:

The testimony of integrity calls us to wholeness; it is the whole of life open to truth. When lives are centred in the Spirit, belief and actions are congruent, and words are dependable. As we achieve wholeness in ourselves, we are better able to heal the conflict and fragmentation in our community and in the world. Integrity is a demanding discipline. We are challenged by cultural values and pressures to conform. Integrity requires that we be fully responsible for our actions. Living with integrity requires living a life of reflection, living in consistency with our beliefs and testimonies, and doing so regardless of personal consequences. Not least, it calls for a single standard of truth.

(Appendix 7, Slide 7)

I do not recall much reaction in the room to this, but the content seems to highlight, and clarify, what I saw as being the main leadership challenge within the ACC. I thought that their confusion about the nature of their identity as a Christian charity translated into them struggling to be consistent in their approach to leadership, as their judgment - which combines belief and action and substantiates integrity, was muddled. However, feedback suggested that the masterclass was '**more "Christian" than we possibly really are**' (Appendix 6.1, point 25), and that it was '**a problem starting from an assumption of Christianity and jargon and values. What bonds the movement is people wanting to help young people improve their lives. The main motivation is not the C thing**' (Appendix 1.8.4 and Appendix 6.4, point 15). These comments indicate that I had made some assumptions about the organization, and perhaps my own judgment was wrong? I think, in this situation, I had misjudged their climate, which resulted in me building on a Christian platform more than on unpacking what being a good leader meant to them. However, my answer to the question, '**is the best way to be/lead a Christian organization really to be a better/more thoughtful Christian?**' (Appendix 6.8, point 29) would be yes. This position proved to be difficult to hold in the room, and it affected my ability to help the organization move forward with their leadership challenges. Leadership has many subtle factors and features which are not easily simplified, but for me, if faith is present I have become clearer that it should take priority over, and underpin leadership.

#### *5.5.5.2 The value of the HDM*

The HDM was mostly well received. I wrote about the value of the HDM:

**The HDM has the capacity to provide audience participation and engagement. The session could have been constructed entirely around it, using it to draw out leadership challenges and to support shared meaning around concepts. The model however was introduced after the theory section and after some controversy regarding the Christian nature of the ACC had already taken place. It was**

therefore not in a good position in the running order to extract the most value and there was not sufficient time to demonstrate how insightful it can be.

This session with the model received mixed feedback:

- The model was confusing – needs me to think more! (NB: This may not be a bad thing; it could be the model opened up areas of exploration that were unfamiliar)
- I didn't buy into the model as I was not engaged in the presentation (unfortunately the theory introduction lost this person and they disengaged thereafter)
- The model does not celebrate diversity when introduced from a wholly Christian perspective. I don't think I fully understood the model as I disengaged from the presentation.

But some people clearly did understand it and found it helpful:

- (I will) use the holistic development model
- (I will) reflect on the outcomes of the model
- (I will) reflect on the model
- (I) might use tool in some way with staff
- (I will) explore with senior team
- (I will) speak to senior staff about their thoughts on this

#### Learning Reflection

*How I wish I had had the courage of my convictions. I agree with the participants about the need for greater conversation and sharing of perspectives. I know that the model creates a space for this to happen. We might not have had to move into the explicit tensions of 'being Christian' if I had allowed meanings to emerge from the group using the model. The one thing Christian 'talk' does is create division and difference, when in truth the real message of Christ is inclusivity.<sup>60</sup> I am so frustrated that I did not invoke a positive environment with people who so clearly needed to air what was important for them as CEOs.*

**Despite the feedback, it is clear from the actual reflections that emerged during the exercises that some profound insights were called forth as Appendix 5 clearly demonstrates. And some participants concluded from the session that they would:**

- (Do) spiritual development
- Be more devoted

(Appendix 1.8.3)

The results of working with the HDM, some of which can be seen by looking at the flip chart outputs (Appendix 5), were productive. If I had been more confident about using the model as a means to engage people with their own experience (Miller's, 2007, EX type) I might have been able to help people to see how their leadership was impacted by their inspirational centre (whatever that meant for them). This could have opened up avenues for new ways, or new language, to explore what was important within the ACC amongst Christians and non-Christians. I could have helped them to find commonalities and a way to be more aligned.

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<sup>60</sup> I have questioned the nature of inclusivity since I wrote this learning reflection, as shown in Section 5.5.4. Jesus 'died for all', as 2 Corinthians 5.5 states, yet our ability to believe in Him and to receive grace seems to vary. Different belief systems and alternative truth claims can cause resistance, and opposition to this message and these differences can divide opinion.

Feeling accepted and creating a community where people feel they are on the inside and where exchanges can take place conversationally is something Keller (2016 [online]) has recognised as an important way for people to move from unbelief to faith:

Most people in the West need to be welcomed into community long enough for them to hear multiple expressions of the gospel — both formal and informal — from individuals and teachers. As this happens in community, nonbelievers come to understand the character of God, sin, and grace. Many of their objections are answered through this process. Because they are “on the inside” and involved in ongoing relationships with Christians, they can imagine themselves as Christians and see how the faith fleshes out in real life.  
(Keller, 2016, paragraph 4 [online])

#### *5.5.5.3 Facilitation style in context*

Sadly my facilitation skills were a hindrance on the day, ‘**The deliverer’s style switched off a lot of people early on**’ (Appendix 6.4, point 15). However, much of this I attribute to my lack of involvement in the context which prevented JK and I from being the kind of relational leaders that Higton and Alexander (2015 [online]) espouse, ‘Church leadership in the New Testament is inherently collegial: both apostles and local leaders function as groups (or teams), rather than individuals’ (Higton and Alexander, 2015, p. 47 [online]). JK and I were not colleagues with the leaders within the ACC. Rather, JK and I operated as individuals attempting to overlay ideas into a foreign context, and unfortunately we missed our main cue as facilitators:

**At some point there was a pivotal moment when someone asked whether the ACC was a Christian organization? I acknowledged this as an important dynamic and believe a short discussion was held re: this being something that was necessary for the ACC to resolve but I didn’t stop to really spend time on this as I was conscious of wanting to move into work with the HDM<sup>61</sup>. In retrospect, I should have taken the time to allow more discussion in the room as this was such a core point.**  
(Appendix 1.7)

JK and I had not had sufficient access to the internal situation within the organization prior to the masterclass. Apart from one meeting, we were not directly involved with ACC, as our client was the business school, so we did not have an ACC partner. We were informed of ACC’s leadership development strategy from a distance which reduced the ability of JK and I to shape and embed any conversation we might want to have about leadership in the particulars of their context.

Yet such a conversation was clearly needed as the feedback shows:

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<sup>61</sup> Here it appears that I was intent on adhering to my priorities for the workshop rather than those of the ACC.

**One of the main pitfalls in the workshop was that the presenters did not have sufficient insight into the operations of the ACC. This problem could have been greatly alleviated if the masterclass had been co-designed and facilitated with an internal ACC person. Many comments revealed this was necessary and would have been helpful:**

- **I thought there was possibly an absence of understanding of previous articulation of the Christian basis of the movement (i.e. greater knowledge would have improved the theoretical material and grounded the discussion in our collective practice).**
- **More research was required before delivery**
- **All ACC's are different but the assumption was that we were all in the same place.**
- **I did feel that there were other people here who could have led a more dynamic session and understood us better.**
- **I wonder if the brief and context of ACC movement was clear for you as organisers and facilitators**
- **Wrong assumptions**
- **Please listen more carefully to the brief and engage presenters who have more empathy with the audience**

*Learning Reflection*

*Given the short time frames and the centrality of the business school as the main point of contact with the client, I do feel that the client manager and the internal sponsors could have done more to support the design of what was being covered in such a key part of the pilot leadership programme. In fact upon reflection, it is more than surprising that there was such a hands-off approach – particularly as this is such a critical area of importance in more ways than one. Given that this is a difficult and challenging area, a masterclass of this type was probably not the most suitable forum for these issues to be aired.*

*There is certainly ambiguity in the organization about what Christian Spirituality is, and its value to the organization and the communities it serves. The Christian message [can] create conflict (Luke 12.51) and so part of the paradox lies in the nature of what it means to be Christian. Following the workshop, the new Executive for Spiritual Development kindly shared with me an MA thesis [...] which looked at: What are the key issues facing the English ACC in the twenty-first century as it seeks to work out its Christian mission? [...] This document gives many helpful insights, not least that the tension between Christians and non-Christians in the movement has long historical roots and previous research undertaken by the Grubb Institute revealed that 'there was a fear of openly debating the issue because it was felt it would cause division' and yet that 'it is essential that open debate around [...] theological issues takes place'.*

*Without wishing to make excuses, I did feel a bit 'set up to fail' coming in as an outsider for a three hour session that really could not hope to resolve these underlying issues. The dynamics of 40 Senior Leaders with strong views did create conflict and this could have been foreseen and worked with differently if there had been greater engagement between all parties involved in the masterclass.*

(Appendix 1.8.5)

JK and I had been drawn into a complex web of relationships and varied client expectations. We became compliant with the situation as a matter of expediency. Heron and Reason (1997), in writing about participatory inquiry, give some insights into the situation we were encountering:

In our view, social practices and institutions need to enhance human association by an appropriate integration of these three principles: deciding for others, with others, and for oneself (Heron, 1989; 1993a). Hierarchy provides appropriate direction by those with greater vision, skill and experience (Torbert, 1991); it is authentic when it seeks the developmental emergence of autonomy and co-operation. Collaboration roots the individual within a community of peers, offering basic support and the creative and corrective feedback of other views and possibilities (Randall and Southgate, 1980). Autonomy expresses the creative, self-creating and self transfiguring potential of the person (Heron, 1992). The shadow face of authority is authoritarianism; that of collaboration peer pressure and conformity; that of autonomy narcissism, wilfulness and isolation. The challenge is to design institutions which manifest valid forms of these principles; and to find ways in which they can be maintained in self correcting and creative tension. This kind of flourishing is practical knowing: knowing how to choose and act - hierarchically, cooperatively, autonomously - to enhance personal and social fulfilment and that of the eco-networks of which we are a part. Such human fulfilment is consummated in the very process of choosing and acting. (Heron and Reason, 1997, p.287)

What this means to me is that the very process of engagement in sharing collaboratively, and honestly, about what is really going on in any organizational context, is part of the process of change. We were commissioned by those in authority in the structure, and 'decided for others' but we were not able to work cooperatively 'with others' (representatives of the organization) to design a tailored response. Whilst we worked autonomously, and decided for ourselves what we thought would be helpful content in a workshop that would engage people, our 'choosing and acting' was not rooted in 'a community of peers' and so the feedback which we needed earlier in the process was not available until the day of the workshop. There is wisdom in recognising that the process by which consultants become involved in an organization is as much a part of the success or failure of the proposed intervention as any teaching component. JK and I were choosing to acquiesce to a chain of decision making that had already taken place so that we could get some client work for EPICC. We hoped that we would be able to support a shared inquiry into faith and leadership. The opportunity seemed providential and we felt that it was a 'God-given' opportunity. But the lack of genuine connection and collegiality within the working relationship proved to be a hindrance. The structure and systems, resource limitations, and our conformity to power manifested by fear of challenging hierarchical authority in organizational life, prevented mutual openness and trust which are essential factors for real change to take place.

Paul (2016) writes about how the spirituality of leadership is 'profoundly shaped by the spiritual discipline of mutuality in ministry' (Paul, 2016, p.6). This is practiced when:

a small [...] group of people [provide] a robust context for mutual accountability and support where depth of friendship grows over the years. [And for some] having a spiritual director or mentor who is outside the immediate context [...] offers something similar.

(Paul, 2016, p.6-7)

I am much happier to work in small group settings or on a one-to-one basis, and agreed to the ACC work when it was positioned as a small group of self-selecting participants who were interested in exploring faith and leadership. Horsfall (2008) outlines how spiritual mentoring in small groups is a rich way to develop (Horsfall, 2008, p.113) and I had envisaged the ACC work through this lens.

However, the migration through a range of changes meant the masterclass was delivered as a considerably different proposition, and there was limited time after the changes and prior to the event to crystallise what that meant to us as facilitators. The masterclass concept was, therefore, poorly executed and thus flawed, and my role in contributing to the perceived failure of the masterclass was disappointing and discouraging, but not totally disheartening, for me. Highton and Alexander (2015 [online]) write:

As we pursue diverse improvisations in leadership, we must not mistake failure for disaster. Some improvisations will fail – or, at least, they will not produce the renewal or the growth or the depth that we hoped for. Sometimes, there may be lessons that our prayerful reflection can learn from such failures.

(Highton and Alexander, 2015, p.78-79 [online])

I have been able to learn from the ACC work and have used it to reflect on faith and leadership, to see how consultancy work starts earlier than the delivery phase, and that facilitation of large groups is not my best sphere of operation.

## **5.6 Emerging Theme 5 – Complex combinations of faith in relation to work**

My case study offers some rich material to show how controversy over faith can arise even in a Christian organization. The data shows how different perspectives operate in work contexts. It also shows that JK and I had difficulty in living up to our ideal of operating as catalysts to bring change. Living the Christian faith is not easy. However, our stepping into the ACC environment did create waves, and stirred up a limited conversation about how the organization understood its openly declared Christian position. I examined EPICC's involvement in a client-focused faith and leadership workshop by exploring the areas of Christian emphasis, leadership, language, inclusivity and my position as a consultant. Becoming clearer about my Christian position, has given me a greater willingness to take risks by talking about faith openly.

It has been difficult for me to recognise that there is difference amongst Christians, as well as difference between Christianity and other faiths, or those of no faith. I believe in the unity that the Holy Spirit brings to the church, and had previously assumed Christians would be more aligned. It is challenging to speak about faith since being explicit about some aspects of the Christian faith can be divisive. In the ACC case study I can see myself operating as a person who has a Christian mind as Blamires (1963) writes about, a person who 'challenges current prejudices [...] disturbs the complacent [...] obstructs the busy pragmatists [...] questions the very foundations of all about him, and [...] is a nuisance' (cited in Stott, 2006, p.61). Blamires argued that there is no longer a truly Christian way of thinking about life and culture and politics and every sphere of our existence; the Christian mind has been replaced with the secular both in the church and in the world. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) have taken an updated look at the Christian worldview and how it can influence work contexts, which has been helpful to me as I have tried to make sense of my experiences. One useful point is that, 'When we say that Christians work from a gospel worldview, it does not mean that they are constantly speaking about Christian teaching in their work' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.179). The proclamation aspect of the Christian gospel is not the only way to live out faith. This insight has helped me to evaluate my approach.

Since Keller and Alsdorf (2012, p.21) propose that Christians live out of a Christian worldview, they describe what they mean by worldview. Any world view, or narrative, consists of posing and answering three questions:

How are things supposed to be?

What is the main problem with things as they are?

What is the solution and how can it be realized?

The biblical worldview understands the answers to these questions as:

1. Humankind is fundamentally relational.
2. The main problem is not with any part of the world or in any particular group of people but in sin itself. Sin = our loss of relationship with God.
3. The gospel solution is that God's grace, through Christ, restores our relationship with God.

(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.160-162)

The gospel encompasses a storyline which includes the character of God, the goodness of material creation, the value of the human person, the fallenness of all people and things, the primacy of love and grace, the importance of justice and truth, the hope of redemption. Meaning therefore comes from loving and serving God and neighbour. Keller and Alsdorf (2012, p.19-24) recognise that ideas about FAW work stem from many streams of Christian

thought and teaching, and that there are different ways to interpret how to put the Christian worldview into practice. This makes the area challenging for Christians:

of all the ways that the Christian faith affects work, the realm of worldview is the most searching and yet also the hardest to put into practice. All Christians live in cultures and work in vocational fields that operate by powerful master narratives that are sharply different from the gospel's account of things [...] Being a Christian give us a new perspective on every culture, every worldview, and every field of work [...] but it takes time to grasp and incorporate this new information in to how we live and pursue our vocations.

(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.181-182)

And 'Christian ethics, motives, identity, witness and worldview shape our work in very different ways depending on the form of work' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.22). These comments show that grappling with specifics is difficult, and context is an important element in working out the way a person can serve God through their work, taking into account their particular vocation, culture and historical moment. I have come to see my work through EPICC as partly being about the restoring and cultivating of a Christian worldview, although how to do this remains a question, the answer to which lies in working things out specifically in context, rather than generally.

Keller and Alsdorf (2012) offer both simple and complex answers as to how Christians can take faith to work. The simple answer is that of honouring God, loving neighbour, and serving the common good. Leaders are to:

treat all people and their work with dignity [and to] create an environment in which people can flourish and use their God-given gifts to contribute to society. [Christian leaders are to] embody grace, truth, hope and love in the organizations [they] create [and to] express [their] relationship with God and his grace to [...] in the way we speak, work, and lead, not as perfect exemplars but as pointers to Christ.

(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.15)

Or as EPICC had thought, just by being there you are going to change things. The complex response is in the detail of how this is translated since 'Christians are never as good as their right beliefs should make them and non-Christians are never as bad as their wrong beliefs should make them' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p. 197). In this they recognise 'the biblical conception of work, as a vehicle for God's loving provision in the world' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p. 186) which means everyone's contribution is important. Everyone has a part to play through their work as 'work is our design and our dignity, it is [...] a way to serve God through creativity, particularly in the creation of culture' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.55). They make the point that 'simple physical labour is God's work no less than the formulation of theological truth' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.49); all can bring forth goodness and worth.

So when Keller and Alsdorf write about integration of faith and work they acknowledge that God is behind all work, including the work of our colleagues and neighbours, and that Christians should be 'very engaged with the cultural and vocational worlds of non-Christians' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.197). Christians are to 'serve alongside those who don't believe as we do, for the good of the city and the world' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.243). Their thinking is based on the ideas of common grace and general revelation (as I explained in Chapter 3.2.4):

An understanding of common grace [...] should lead us to freely and humbly work with others who may not share our faith but can be used greatly by God to accomplish enormous good. At the same time, an understanding of the gospel worldview means we should at times respectfully pursue a different path or winsomely point out how our own Christian faith give us powerful resources and guidance for what we are doing.

(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.192)

Drawing on Romans 1.18-25, Keller and Alsdorf (2012) see that:

the reality of God's nature and our obligations to him are continuously presented to us. These realities are not static, propositional information, but rather a continually fresh, insistent pressure on the consciousness of every individual. If this is true, then every artifact of human culture is a positive response to God's general revelation and *simultaneously* a rebellious assertion against his sovereign rule over us.

(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.194)

Consequently, they recognise, 'Human culture is a complex mixture of brilliant truth, marred half-truths, and overt resistance to the truth' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.194). All cultural production (and all work is some form of cultural production, even menial work as it cares for the material creation) is a dialogue between our innate, affirming response to God's common grace and the idolatrous, rebellious nature of our hearts. That's why everyone needs 'to work out in clear personal terms how their work serves the world' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.109). The gospel worldview provides an alternate storyline for work, whereby we work as partners with God in his love and care for the world. The gospel gives us ethical guidelines, freedom from being overly attached to our work, and inner power to help us make decisions that are distinctively Christian.

Although God made us for work, work has become, under sin, painful toil (Genesis 3. 17),<sup>62</sup> and that while work itself is not a curse, thorns and thistles (Genesis 3.18) come up:

*all* work and human effort will be marked by frustration and a lack of fulfillment [...] we [...] envision far more than we can accomplish [because of] resistance in the environment around us. The experience of work will include pain, conflict, envy and fatigue, and not all our goals will be met [...] you may have an aspiration to do a

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<sup>62</sup> Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, cite scripture from: Holy Bible, (2011), New International Version, Biblica

certain kind of work [but] you may never even get the opportunity to do the work you want [or] you may not be able to do it as well as it needs to be done.  
(Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.90)

Sin has disordered the world so that 'nothing works now as it should. Sin leads to disintegration in every area of life: spiritual, physical, social, cultural, psychological, temporal, eternal' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.85). Sin affects 'not only personal and private life, but also public and social life, and in particular work' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.89).

Despite these negatives, all work done in cooperation with God, has eternal significance. Volf (2001) has formulated a theology of work that has broken away from thinking about work as a vocation, and has instead associated work with the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. He has proposed *charisma* (talent or gifting) as the central theological account of work. Volf's theology of work is eschatological, as well as pneumatological, in that he develops a deep and involved understanding of new creation that looks toward the consummation of the present age. Such thinking can have a profound effect on our daily work since the belief that one's work can have eternal significance is potentially transformative. Volf (2011) examined the practical outworking of theological understanding in relation to the economy, and considers theology to be a way of life that blends both church and public theology. He recognises that when it comes to the public sphere Christians can fall into two extremes: either leaving faith out of their public life; or being fully engaged but in a dominant way that promotes the Christian faith to those of other faiths or of no faith. He argues against both secular exclusivists and religious totalitarians, suggesting that freedom of religion and the Golden Rule should guide how faiths relate to each other in the public space. Volf contends that there is no single Christian way to relate to the broader culture as a whole. Instead, while remaining true to the convictions of their own faith, Christians should approach their larger cultures in an ad-hoc way, accepting or partly changing some aspects of culture, possibly completely withdrawing from still others, and cheerfully celebrating many others.

Various groups are available to help Christians explore and understand how a Christian worldview might apply in particular work contexts. Many of these have been valuable to me (see Appendix 8) as they have created a supportive climate in which my research sits. MODEM has been particularly influential since AH had invited me to be part of MODEM's leadership committee shortly after we first met. MODEM's old website states its mission as 'a national ecumenical Christian network, which encourages authentic dialogue between exponents of

leadership, organization, spirituality and ministry to aid the development of better disciples, community, society and world' (MODEM, 2016 [online]).

A recent collaboration that stemmed from MODEM's 2012 conference (which I attended), is the book *Developing Leadership, Questions Business Schools Don't Ask* (Mabey and Mayrhofer, 2015). This rich resource sheds light on how business schools are at the centre of a collusive cycle. Given my various experiences of working for, and with, business schools, it is riveting to find a book that challenges the status quo from a number of directions. In light of my experience with ACC, I appreciate a book which questions whether business schools are the best solution for the creation of leadership development strategies. Blakeley (2015) concludes her entry with the thought that:

much of what is wrong in our organizations, institutions and societies is spiritual in nature and [...] both scholars and practitioners have ignored the vital role spirituality plays in sustaining the moral and ethical health of organizations.  
(Blakeley, 2015, p.162)

With such commentary, I feel that I have gone around a full circle of learning. There is no escaping the centrality of the spiritual life, it is at the root of all knowledge and understanding and so it is important for people to recognise it and explore what it means at a personal, corporate and societal level.

### **5.7 Summary of learning**

In this chapter I have explored my practice as a consultant and facilitator in one organization. As Stott (2006) writes 'work occupies such a significant place [...] that as Christians we must learn to think Christianly about it' (Stott, 2006, p.217). In examining my experience I have tried to move beyond simple answers to identify some of the complexity involved in how faith might be lived in relation to work. FAW encompasses blurry theological boundaries as it is drawn from different Christian traditions and is not well supported by the church; it can be difficult to integrate faith and work but doing so can be transformative. By drawing on Keller and Alsdorf (2012), I have come to see that my work is oriented towards the cultivation of a Christian worldview with those who are already receptive, but there are a variety of ways to interpret how a Christian worldview can be enacted. Questioning how to live out a Christian worldview is where this thesis began, and I am in danger of going round in circles. In my view, discernment within the context is the vital ingredient and such discernment is aided through tools of spiritual formation such as prayer, scripture and reflection, and can be supported through spiritual mentoring.

My work with the ACC created a context for examining faith in relation to leadership. I considered how to present the concept of leadership, as it is a concept which is not straightforward. There is no one single template for what a leader should be or do, and leadership is holistic in its reach. In the Bible leadership is mentioned as one gift among many, it is not recognised as a dominant gift. Higton and Alexander (2015 [online]) describe how the church over time has adopted various models of leadership, but that church leaders should 'direct attention back to the Lord'. In work contexts, that mission is not the primary focus and this makes the area of faith and work challenging for Christians. Volf (2011) presents the view that Christians should not leave faith out of work, but neither should they be overly evangelistic. In ACC there was a continuum of emphasis which ranged between evangelistic proclamation and social action. From Miller's (2007) model of integration I see that evangelism is an aspect of FAW but that there are other strands such as ethics, experience and enrichment. Miller thereby adds experience and enrichment to the range of choice between salvation and justice. These additional choices incorporate the areas of personal transformation and show how work can provide meaning and purpose.

By using the HDM I was able to start a conversation about individual meaning, and to begin to investigate the complexity of interpretation around Christian inclusivity with some leaders, drawing on the experience of their own operational context. Good leaders need to approach their work with faithful improvisation, and that involves the formation of their character. I have understood the concept of leadership formation, supported by mentoring, to be valuable mechanisms to develop the spiritual character of leaders. Stott (2006) recognises that, 'Work is one of the key ways in which we express our Christian character' (Stott, 2006, p.233). Both leadership and Christian leadership encompass qualities of character such as judgment, integrity and courage. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) recognise that 'character, courage, humility, love and justice' were qualities of a well lived life according to the: 'ancients' (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.149). Whilst the ancients may not have been Christian as such, qualities of good character were the ultimate measurement in life. Following the call of Christ can shape character in line with these qualities.

In my understanding, leadership may emerge as an aspect of the Spirit's work. The Spirit enables transformation, and there are many ways in which God's Spirit might be at work in us and through us. I attempted to convey the value of leadership formation, which takes place in community, to the ACC leaders. They were not able to access this understanding for

themselves very well, which may have been down to my poor facilitation of the materials, but which was also tied to the organization's lack of full participation in guiding how the leadership construct was investigated. There was resistance to the Christian framework of the workshop. Once again, (as I identified in Chapter 3.2), transformation and resistance were factors at play.

I now see the gospel message as a worldview, in the way that Keller and Alsdorf (2012) write about it: that it is relational; sin, as a break away from being in relationship with God, gets in the way; through Jesus the relationship can be restored. The approach of Jesus is to be inclusive, to recognise that everyone has value. As such this is an approach that can be encouraged in work; it is an approach which affirms everyone's contribution as valuable. By constructing positive relationships Christians can choose how to live by the truth of their faith in a variety of ways as appropriate to their culture. One of the ways in which Christians can do this is simply to 'be Christian' and embrace the qualities of grace, love, hope and truth fully themselves. Their example might impact those with objections, who are resistant to the Christian faith.

In the next chapter I present an overview of the entire thesis. I draw out my insights, and list implications for further research.

## **CHAPTER 6: ARRIVING AT THE END**

### **6.1 Overview of Chapter 6**

This chapter takes a critical overview of what has emerged from my academic study. Through action research I have looked closely at my work and inquired into my Christian perspective; I have explored my inner world. In this final chapter I synthesise my ideas in order to make sense of the whole research project. My thesis has charted my journey through the complex area of faith and spirituality, and shows how I have attempted to apply my understanding of Christian spirituality to my work. As I explained in Chapter 1.4, I do not think of spirituality as a suitable subject for generalisation; in fact, my research has deliberately gone beyond generalities and has illuminated some of the difficulties and challenges I have personally faced.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the criteria for judging my work which I outlined in Chapter 2.7. My thesis has resulted in new knowledge and action oriented outcomes. It has been catalytic and democratic within specific contexts. My methodological process has generated results for me, as I have developed my thinking and enriched my spiritual life. In this chapter I consider how my learning may affect my future.

### **6.2 Summary of the Research**

Through my use of action research, informed by practical theology as a qualitative methodology, I was influenced by the pastoral cycle (described in Chapter 2.4). I have explored my experience, and reflected on what it means for me; new actions are resulting from my reflection. I have also been impacted by the notion of 'Operant Theology' (Cameron, 2010), the theology embedded within the actual practices of the group (explained in Chapter 2.4.1). In my later attempts to understand and explain faith and its implications for work I found Jinkins (2001) use of Brown's (1984) hermeneutical cycle (which adds to the action research process the notion of turning to the scriptures with new questions) strengthened my capacity to include biblical scriptures as part of my written cycle of reflection. Cultivating theological insights from my practice has been challenging. Faith:

begins in our practice and language [...] As we believe, talk, live and act, our understanding is (from time to time) challenged, questioned or perhaps even shattered, by new perceptions and new ideas, and by practices that are out of the ordinary. In specifically theological language we might say that sometimes God breaks through [...] Though it is often difficult to explain what this means.  
(Jinkins, 2001, p.64)

Although it has taken a lot for me to explain my practice, I have benefitted from using these various research approaches; consequently my understanding of my spiritual life has been

enriched. I have grown in ways I did not anticipate at the outset. I have an expanded view of God's grace, and a stronger conviction about faith being of greater significance to me than leadership. I have become more committed to speak about God and to be known for being an evangelical Christian. My research has helped me to become clearer about my practice and will affect my future action. I hope my learning is informative for others.

My original research question, identified in Chapter 1, was: how does my Christian faith inform the processes that I use to enable spiritual formation amongst leaders in organizational contexts? Supplementary questions within my inquiry were: what difference does personal faith make to an individual, and what impact might this have on an organization? And: how can faith be explored within organizations? My methodological approach to reflexive analysis, outlined in Chapter 2, enabled me to begin to address these questions. I explored my personal faith by examining what being a Christian means for me, and what difference my faith makes, in relation to three different work contexts. The writing of my thesis has been a huge part of my learning journey. During the writing phase I reframed my research question to become: How does my interpretation of being Christian inform the work I do?

Meaningful learning to address this question emerged from closer examination of five core topic areas, which resulted from my analysis of my four research cycles (found in Chapters 3, 4 and 5). In research cycle one I framed the first three topics as questions relating to transformation: How is EPICC offering something different to conventional wisdom? Does spirituality need to be explicitly Christian? How does Christianity impact our consultancy ideas about change? In research cycles two and three, the fourth topic encompassed a broad exploration of spiritual mentoring and spiritual formation. This topic incorporated consideration of the areas of: church, faith, discernment of purpose and mission using scripture, calling to adventure through leadership, as well as difficulty and struggle. In research cycle four, topic five was an investigation of a Christian application of leadership in relation to the ACC case study, where I looked into the complexity of Christian emphasis, leadership, language, inclusivity and my position as a consultant, in the context of one particular organization. I have clarified what I have learned from my analysis into five themes, a summary of which follows.

### **6.3 Summary of learning emerging from the research**

Writing my thesis has helped me to work out where I fit, what I think and believe and what is of most significance to me. Learning is encapsulated through examination of five themes:

Theme 1 – A Christian Perspective, encompassing Theme 2 – the Grace of God, and Theme 3 – Resistance as Sin; Theme 4 – Spiritual Formation, encompassing spiritual mentoring; and Theme 5 – Faith in Relation to Work.

#### *6.3.1 Theme 1 - An evangelical Christian perspective*

My Christian position has been scrutinized; I have recognised there is diversity amongst Christian viewpoints. Drawing on Sheldrake (1998), and Cockerton (1994), I have identified myself as an evangelical. The realisation of my orientation has provided a foundation from which I have explored my own faith journey. Early influences in my life positioned obedience to the Bible as a core reference point for me. However, I have recognised that subtle complexity is involved in interpreting the Bible, which can be paradoxical; for example the passage in Luke 12 where Christ says he causes division, which contrasts with the desire for Christianity to be inclusive. Principe (1992 [online]) helped me to understand that there are many strands of Christian spirituality, and I have worked with Christians who hold a different position to me. I have concluded for myself that it is important for Christians to examine their faith in order to be clear about the root of their beliefs and how these guide actions. In fact, such self-examination is central, as I understand, in line with Bonhoeffer (1995 [1937]), that Christian spirituality requires individual commitment and a personal response to faith.

The strength of my own commitment to the Christian world view has become clearer to me. Encountering the theology of Karl Barth has confirmed the centrality of Jesus Christ to my understanding of spirituality and spiritual reality. I knew this was true at the beginning of my research journey, but have recognised how this is a non-negotiable core in my identity and that my faith operates as a critique of the world. In my responsiveness to God I now have a greater appreciation of His grace. This has refreshed my motivation to wake humanity up to this spiritual reality; I understand the sense of being woken up as the essence of conversion.

My inquiry into how my evangelical Christian faith informs my work, and in particular my approach to enabling spiritual formation for others, has given me insight into who I am best suited to work with. It has proven difficult for me to work in groups where there is a mix of Christians and other belief systems, when the topic is faith and leadership. My evangelical

position is a challenge for those with no faith, and interpreting how to practise inclusivity remains difficult for me. Yet within my evangelical identity, one that is reinforced through my patterns of worship and church attendance, my relationship with God is not static. Perrin (2007) affirmed Christian spirituality as a journey in which the Holy Spirit is always accomplishing new things. I am open to learning with and from others who have experienced something of God in ways that I have not, as evidenced through my embarking on training to become a spiritual director.

### *6.3.2 Theme 2 - Understanding the grace of God*

In my attempts to investigate and interpret the meaning of inclusivity, insights from Karl Barth established for me profound new understanding into the transcendent love of God, and God's grace, which is available for all. I am resolving my difficulty with inclusivity by accepting that people are made in God's image, although I believe, as an evangelical Christian, that I have an obligation to provoke people to recognise that anything that is not of God is sin. I perceive sin as being anything that keeps someone from being aligned with God's loving will for them. I have taken account of Leyden (2016), who emphasised that what we confess about God shapes our lives, and Stetzer (2012 [online]), who emphasized proclamation. As a recipient of God's grace, I have a responsibility to find ways to be inclusive; yet by being an evangelical I am drawn to speak about my faith, and to have confidence in the gospel message we proclaim. I retain a biblical orientation, but have been willing to engage with others who have a different view of the Christian faith, as this helps me to share my understanding of God's grace. Paradoxically, I have also learned proclamation is not the only way to live out faith.

My work experience demonstrated that evangelical faith was not easily embraced within the ACC. This work resulted in a new question coming to the fore for me: Why is it that some can acknowledge Christ whilst others do not? This is not a question I have addressed comprehensively but is one that requires ongoing exploration.

### *6.3.3 Theme 3 - Resistance as sin*

In examining sin, I drew on the work of Keller and Alsdorf (2012). Sin, they explain as the difference between obeying God, or choosing to decide for ourselves how we should live and what is right and wrong; essentially sin is the choice to be our own source of authority rather than to recognise God's authority (Keller and Alsdorf, 2012, p.85). They see work as a context which can show up the systemic effects of sin; it reveals the idols we put before our

relationship with God. Within the ACC I encountered some of the systemic effects of sin, and could see how resistance by some to a Christian perspective had a wider impact on their community. The insight for me is that sin had a hampering effect on efforts to combine Christian faith and leadership within a particular Christian organization.

By considering sin afresh, in contrast with God's grace, I have recognised its significance in a new way for myself. James (2012) saw that Christian faith and transformation are linked but that people are often resistant to change. By considering how resistance to change is linked to sin (see section 3.2.6), I appreciate in greater depth why and how faith in God's grace is of such central importance. This has affected my motivation. I want to be a catalyst to support others to develop their life of faith, to spread recognition of how work is to be done in partnership with God to demonstrate his love and care for the world. Faith comes first, as Keller (2016 [online]) implies, 'The gospel creates a life of love, but the life of love is not the gospel itself' (Keller, 2016, p.32 [online]).

#### *6.3.4 Theme 4 - How I can enable spiritual formation*

In attempting to understand how I can work in partnership with God I have felt called towards a ministry of spiritual guidance. I perceive spiritual mentoring as a vocation, and have felt led to develop myself as a spiritual mentor. To support my work as spiritual mentor, I used the HDM to create the SLJ process that can support a conversational spiritual journey. The HDM as a framework has been beneficial when used with individuals and as part of small group work. Two insights emerged from my research, firstly I am capable of doing good work on a one to one basis with individuals, and secondly that the opportunity to talk about the spiritual journey is important. The confirmation that I am capable of enabling spiritual development in another has underpinned my desire to undertake further training in spiritual direction.

The area of spiritual development can be messy and I have engaged with the messiness of that process. It can be complex to discern how the Holy Spirit is operating; I have not been afraid to explore some of the areas that are difficult and challenging. Powell (2005) affirmed the necessity of faith within practice; in my practice, I have examined faith directly using the HDM to support spiritual formation with one individual. The areas that arose for exploration were: church, faith, purpose, adventure, struggle and difficulty (see Chapter 4.3). I have looked at some of the scriptural basis which underpins these areas and created a new version of the

HDM, the Christian Development Model (CDM, see Figure 8), which has incorporated scriptural understanding.

I initially set out to examine the ways in which Christian spirituality can affect leadership. The personal nature of working out spiritual and faith questions has been connected with leadership (particularly by Fry, 2013 [online]). I discovered some of the complications that can arise in work settings around faith and leadership. Schwöbel (2006 [online]) helped me see that the bringing together of Christianity and empirical reality is the work of the Christian life. It involves conversion or *metanoia*, movement away from the old towards the new. This pinpoints for me that the faith dimension is a more significant priority than leadership, and my data demonstrates this point. EPICC recognised that inspiration and spirituality 'should be the complete backdrop' (see section 3.2.4). JK commented on the holistic nature of my work which encouraged me to see it as going beyond leadership. Through my examination of spiritual formation as it links to leadership, I have seen that the movement between faith and leadership concerns is complex. It involves looking closely at what faith means to an individual which is not a simple or linear process, instead it is messy. I have concluded that spiritual formation should be given priority in people's lives and my work can support this.

#### *6.3.5 Theme 5 - Complex combinations of faith in relation to work*

The personal nature of Christian identity has come to the fore. How a person understands their call to be Christian is something each person needs to examine for themselves. Because the call is holistic, work is an important aspect of the practice of faith. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) emphasise the significance of work as an essential part of God's design which incorporates culture making and service. Work enables us to use our gifts and passions, and to be useful to others as we become skilful and competent. Contradictory understandings about faith and work reveal that a Christian worldview, and how to serve God through particular work contexts, can be interpreted in various ways. Finding the most appropriate way forward involves taking into account the specifics of a person's vocation, culture, and the context, time and place in which they live.

I retain my view that a Christian perspective is important to work, and I value the ability to deepen faith by being part of a faith community, the church. However, I have also regarded the work environment as a space in which a deepening journey with God can be enabled. I think my Christian perspective, which locates God as the author of work, offers creative and

bold possibilities for work. Burrows (2006) says that true work lies at the heart of the gospel message, ‘the only work the Father asks of us is to “believe in the one whom he has sent”’<sup>63</sup> (Burrows, 2006, p.29). Sustaining our belief in God is central to everything, it spans out into all we are and do; so if we believe, how does that affect our lives? Burrows argues we must be wary of ‘the gap between our theoretical knowledge and the attitudes that, in practice, direct our lives. We must be deeply concerned with closing this gap’ (Burrows, 2006, p.29). Our response to the gospel is holistic in its scope.

Within the ACC case study a question arose: Does being a good leader in a Christian organization mean being a better Christian? My research of the ACC context helped me to examine the areas of: Christian emphasis, leadership, language, inclusivity and my position as a consultant. I drew on the research of Higton and Alexander (2015 [online]) to try to understand Christian leadership. My conclusion is that how a person, or organisation, identifies as Christian is vital. Being a better Christian, and nurturing faith, are of central importance because they are the areas God is working on; even if nurturing faith is perplexing, not immediately clear, or seems fraught with difficulty. Such tension between inspiration and reality is an area of concern within SAW and FAW, and my thesis has provided insider knowledge about it. My research has made a contribution to knowledge in ways that I can now outline.

#### **6.4 Contribution to knowledge**

I have made an original contribution to knowledge by providing an insider account which has given access to my self-awareness and self-management processes. This account provides new knowledge about the actions and beliefs of a practitioner. Through my practical use of the HDM, theoretical analysis and reflective exploration, this thesis contributes to the field of SAW since it moves away from generalities towards specific practices.

In Chapter 2.5.3 I highlighted thoughts from Coghlan and Brannick (2010) about the value of action research, and in particular how it helps researchers to take a ‘close look’ at their work:

Action researchers take a close look at what they are doing and act to make things better than they already are. Taking a closer look is action in and of itself, and that research, that knowledge creation, any action taken based on that research has the potential to transform the work that we do, the working conditions that we sweat under, and most importantly the people who we are.  
(Coghlan and Brannick 2010, p.16)

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<sup>63</sup> from John 6.29, Holy Bible, New International Version

In this section I reflect on what the 'closer look' has meant for me, by incorporating Reason and Marshall's (2001) identification of action research as being for first, second and third person (see Chapter 1.6). I reflect on what difference my research has made to changing *my* work (me), *our* work (us; in the sense of Workplace Matters as a consultancy), and *their* work (them; work in general). This knowledge helps me to consider how my interpretation of being Christian will inform the work I do in the future.

#### *6.4.1 My Work (me) - Being a reflexive practitioner*

My Christian identity has developed. I now have greater confidence in who I am, what I know and what I can do. Williams (2004) recognises such self-awareness is important:

To be a means of reconciliation for another within the body of Christ you must be consciously yourself, knowing a bit about what has made you who you are, what your typical problems and brick walls are, what your gifts are.  
(Williams, 2004, p.39)

Through examining my Christian faith I have become increasingly conscious of my own spiritual journey. My inquiry has led me to become more explicit about the value of my faith.

Becoming more open has led me to examine my capacity to demonstrate the effect of faith within my work, and this has changed my practice. One change is that, since 2014, I now regularly host a Faith in the Workplace small group with Christians from the St Alban's Vineyard church. I continue to work with the HDM, but my focus has expanded, and I am happy to use other Christian resources to promote discussion about spirituality and work. My confidence to act out of my faith has led to my involvement in Christian projects locally. Through giving so much attention to spirituality, I also found myself being invited to take up the role of Convener for the spirituality series of Grove books.

Such changes in my practice indicate that I can work well when I am in a role that is suited to my capabilities. I view the opportunities that have come my way as positive feedback, and yet my research has shown that I have experienced both positive, and less than positive, outcomes from my work. For me, what matters, whether I am working with Christians or non-Christians, is that I am developing my capability to bring a quality of Christian presence, and understanding, to each new setting. I need discernment, wisdom and courage about how to draw the spiritual dimension into projects and situations. I have learned that when my work has not landed well it may not be entirely my fault; that my success or failure is partially dependent on the particular people and context. Palmer recognised that people are at

different places in their levels of receptivity to change; consequently they may not be open to interventions:

most people can and will come to life in their own way and time, and if we try to help them by hastening the process, we end up doing harm.  
(Palmer, 2004, p.62)

He continues:

When we understand that our efforts to help other people can be unhelpful, or worse, we may start to avert our eyes from their struggles and pains, not knowing what to do and embarrassed by our own ineptitude. If our efforts to “fix” others do not help them, and might even harm them, what is left except to walk away?  
(Palmer, 2004, p.63)

My choice to live from my evangelical Christian world view in relation to my work has led me to be stymied by others; I was challenged by the ACC, and felt somewhat paralysed afterwards by the perceived failure that resulted. My research shows that divisions over faith are very real. Since it is possible that good work can be done in the world without any need to be explicit about the Christian faith, my research has led me to reflect on why my Christian perspective matters to me so much.

Assessing my competence as a professional practitioner depends, for me, on how I assess the reason for doing a particular piece of work; what the purpose of the work is. I have become more aware of my own spiritual purpose, which can be construed as my Christian ministry and mission. According to Song (2014 [online]) Bosch said that:

spirituality is not something that can be isolated from the rest of our existence [...] our spirituality must somehow find its root and anchor in the midst of a sinful and hurting world.  
(Song, 2014, p.7 [online])

Bosch (1980) wrote:

What makes a Christian is not his personal experience of grace and redemption but his ministry. Conversion and vocation in the Bible mean being given a task in the world.  
(Bosch, 1980, p.226)

For Bosch, spirituality is about being aligned with what God is doing in the world and participating in God’s work (*missio Dei*). My thesis has helped me to gain clarity about what my task in the world might be, and in so doing I have greater clarity about my Christian position in the field of SAW.

When I worked with the ACC, I had an opportunity to engage people who might be labelled as spiritual seekers. My approach to my work has been based on my conscious awareness of the

holistic nature of humanity, and the potential impact of a person's spiritual life on their work. I have developed my theological foundation, and confidence, to act as a Christian spiritual guide in the territory of SAW. Yet, because spiritual diversity exists, I have become more aware that my approach may need modifying; I need to start with people where they are. The challenge for me has been around how evangelical to be, by that I mean how much to disclose about my knowledge of the biblical God as the root motivation for what I do. Evangelism is essentially about reaching out to others with the natural overflow of the love of God. Working in professional environments requires sensitivity to determine when such reaching out is appropriate, and in what ways any disclosure about God is conveyed. It has helped me to consider the breadth of 21<sup>st</sup> century mission, which the ecumenical Five Marks of Mission captures as being to:

- proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God;
  - teach, baptize and nurture new believers;
  - respond to human need by loving service;
  - seek to transform unjust structures of society; and
  - safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.
- (Paul, 2016, p.17)

Mission and evangelism are about more than the first two points. Whilst the term evangelical encompasses preaching the gospel, making converts and expanding the church e.g. rescuing the lost, the gospel message is about more than personal salvation. It is about recognising the sovereignty of God over all of life and living holistically. A personal relationship with God sustains life as a whole which includes service through work, being involved in the messy complexity of societal change, and living the Christian life with respect for the earth.

I noted (in Chapter 4.2.3) that living under the reign of God includes finding out what God is doing in a world characterised by injustice, corruption, fatalism and all sorts of ungodliness. As Christians we need to find out how we can be involved in God's work, whilst recognising that the reign of God will not be fully achieved until the second coming of Jesus Christ. The reign of God:

expresses itself in the way we view other fellow human beings and in the manner we reach out to them, that is in our evangelism and social concerns.  
(Song, 2014, p.7 [online])

Evangelical spirituality, as seeking God, is not the only goal; the church also has a role in transforming society. Thus evangelical spirituality, and mission, as defined by the last three points in Paul's (2016) list above, are linked to work which is a place where we can transform the world as we participate in it; in fact, transformation is the purpose of the Christian life. Injustice should be challenged, the earth's resources need to be used in a sustainable way and

organizations can be a conduit for responding to human need through service as they support human flourishing and the common good.

Whilst multi-cultural and diverse work environments make it difficult to proselytize, or teach doctrine, as part of organizational purpose, it is possible to be guided through one's spiritual life about work. Proselytising is only one method that Christians might consider as a tool for doing God's work. I now see that the doing of good work is, in itself, purposeful; people can be conduits for God's Spirit of grace in a variety of ways. This is reassuring for me as whilst I have identified myself as evangelical, I do not perceive myself as being gifted at preaching the gospel. Rather my interest is around how the spiritual life impacts people, and I have identified that my strength is to work with spiritual dwellers.

Perceiving myself as a spiritual mentor, a person with a ministry to promote the work of God in the life of another, has changed my practice. Jesus was a model spiritual director; he made himself available, engaged in creative dialogue, listened, and asked penetrating questions. By linking the HDM to an explicitly Christian perspective, I feel I am at a Kairos (*καιρός*) moment<sup>64</sup>. The aim of my work with Christians is to enable openness to the presence of God and to expand awareness of the Kingdom of God. There is a transcendent, miraculous dimension in this space which is the work of the Holy Spirit. The invoking of the Holy Spirit brings a sense of immediacy to thinking, and I am mindful of Gillet's (1993) understanding about it (see Chapter 3.2.4 and 3.2.5). My spirit is quickened as I recognise my research presents a new opportunity for me, an area for growth with great possibility. I want to continue to develop my skills, including developing my ability to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in others' lives; the spiritual direction course will help me to gain experience in this. I am intentional about seeking to enable spiritual formation in the lives of others. I have appreciated that I need a spiritual director myself; I now have such a person in place and this has been a further change to my practice.

I see that over the years the focus of my work has changed. I have become oriented towards work that supports the church and ideal of the Kingdom of God, whereas I once supported generic learning and development. I now feel more compelled by the vision of my work as mission and ministry, and my Christian commitment affects the way my work is organised. I recognise more clearly how my practice is theologically informed; I want to be sensitive to how

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<sup>64</sup> Kairos is an ancient Greek word meaning the right or opportune moment

God might be using me to speak into situations, or to raise awareness. Through my research I have learned more about myself, how I feel when I am doing good work, and how I feel when things are not going so well. This learning will help me in the future to pay attention more fully in the present moment, and to adjust my conversations, with individuals or groups, so that I can be competent at engaging with them where they are; not from my own sense of what I thought was needed.

#### *6.4.2 Our Work (us) - The process of using the HDM from a Christian perspective*

My work as part of Workplace Matters has had diminishing success. AH sadly passed away, and the focus, energy and momentum of EPICC dwindled. Drawing from Ballard and Pritchard (1996) I can acknowledge that all is not well; how things really are is not how I would wish them to be. I have kept in touch with JK and attempted to find other clients. Small work projects have come my way but nothing of the volume and type of work we envisaged. I have maintained my consultancy presence through Holistic Leadership to support leadership development. I have tested my capacity to enable spiritual mentoring against Anderson and Reese's (1999) five movements in the spiritual mentoring process (attraction, relationship, responsiveness, accountability and empowerment) and will continue to use this as a guide in my client practice. The nature of my work has strengthened my vocation as a mentor, thinker, writer and researcher.

I wondered (in Chapter 1.4) whether, and how, Christians should engage with the field of SAW. Following the advice of Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2009) (see Chapter 2.4.2), my research has challenged assumptions and investigated the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those working in the SAW field, particularly those of myself and my colleagues. I now understand that the Christian worldview helps 'to provide a more balanced and holistic work environment' (Miller, 2007, p. 150); it offers a whole life perspective which can help people to balance various pressures. Sheldrake (1998) (see Chapter 2.4.2) encourages theological reflection on spiritual experience, recognising that such reflection has practical implications; Christian spirituality makes a difference to our daily action, since we live what we affirm. Having resonated with the concept of being a spiritual dweller, I am acting on the authority of my evangelical understanding of Christian truth to support conversations which can help people to investigate Christian spirituality.

I have developed a way of exploring the HDM using a biblical interpretation and recast it from a Christian perspective. Best (2011 [online]) portrayed the HDM as a valuable tool to support leadership development. I have looked further into the central tension of the model, the tension between inspiration and reality (identified in section 3.2.4); my investigation has opened up a way to unlock assumptions by exploring Christian spiritual realities. This encompasses acknowledgement of a theological component which has not previously been examined, and takes into account areas such as church, faith, discernment using scripture, the call to adventure, and the role of difficulty and struggle, as part of the spiritual landscape. Previously, the HDM has been positioned more from the perspective of being a spiritual seeker. Whilst the HDM is useful as a broad gateway to explore lifestyle choices, I felt there had been a gap which needed to be addressed, as it had not gone far enough into the depths of spirituality or specifics of Christianity. Christian spirituality is different from more general descriptions of spirituality because of the centrality of Jesus Christ. My evangelical Christian interpretation of the HDM promotes awareness of how we can be reformed into the character of Jesus, and it can now be used by other Christian spiritual dwellers. My first attempt at interpreting the HDM from a Christian perspective is not definitive, but I have been able to make the model my own. Whilst I recognise that Christian spirituality is not easily generalisable, my approach may help others to think about where they might place themselves, if they are considering how to support Christian development through a holistic outworking of Christian spirituality.

#### *6.4.3 General Work Context (them) - Spiritual formation in relation to work*

My outlook on the type of work I want to be involved in has changed. I am more interested in supporting the spiritual formation of Christians, individually through spiritual mentoring, and through conversations in small groups, than in attracting people in general work contexts to see the value of spirituality. I recognise that I was not particularly effective as a change agent in one organizational setting, but that the HDM is a tool that can be used to support conversations about transformational change in relation to work.

Christian spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. There is a desire for integration (Miller, 2007) between spiritual and work lives. The main difficulty of advocating Christian spirituality within public environments is that despite the sure knowledge that God is shaping reality through the means of His sovereign grace, it is difficult to find ways that can communicate this in a form that others can receive. Orthodoxy, orthopraxy and

orthopathy show that faith affects thinking, behaviours (actions) and feelings; from this I see that faith certainly should have an impact within organizational life, and spiritual formation can help with the exploration of faith in particular contexts. But there are opposing forces such as internal fears, repression, denial, and resistance, which create hindrances to living life in a way that aligns with God. Therefore, people have limited receptivity to a consultancy service which offers to support Christian spiritual formation in an organization. These barriers to entry, before any work has been agreed to and undertaken, mean that I have found opportunities to operate as a spiritual mentor in work contexts are rare.

Yet there is a hunger amongst Christians to explore work-related themes. From my involvement in church FAW groups I see that, in a different way than I had anticipated, I have been able to support spiritual formation in relation to people's work. Miller (2007b) identified that pastors and theologians can feel inadequate to the task of FAW, suggesting that language contributes to the perceived divide between theology and business. He argued that religious professionals can feel 'inadequate' (Miller, 2007b, p.93) about how to respond, whilst people in business are not 'biblically literate' (Miller, 2007b, p.94). The problem he outlines is that 'people in the workplace crave theological guidance' (Miller, 2007b, p.94) but they do not easily find help in church and so they turn to secular wisdom for help. I see that my research, and my offer to be a spiritual mentor, is addressing this problem. My inquiry, and EPICC's, blended around a key question: How does our interpretation of being Christian inform the work we do? Self-examination is part of the spiritual and leadership journey, and it is important for each person to investigate how their thinking influences their practice. EPICC was concerned with transformation towards spiritual maturity; what I have found is that there are no easy shortcuts. Theology can be problematic, but it is important for us to wrestle with our understanding of it personally. As my SLJ process can support self-examination amongst leaders, something which Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2009, p.316-317) emphasised, it may be of interest to other practitioners in the broader SAW field.

The hunger for SAW remains active as the spiritual dimension is an area which affects organizational life. Laloux (2015 [online]) provides an example of how the SAW conversation continues. He talks about the need for wholeness in organizations, arguing that we need to stop putting a lid on what really matters to us, and fulfil our longing to take care of people and the planet through what we do in organizations. He mentions the spiritual aspect as part of that wholeness alongside the emotional and intuitive, acknowledging that most organizations

operate from a rational position. His encouragement is for leaders to engage everyone at a deeper level, incorporating head, heart and soul. This sounds positive, but I see it as a demonstration of a generalised conviction which glosses over the subtle differences existing in and between people. My experience has been that a strong, godly, spiritual root is necessary for meaningful change. Certain aspects such as listening to the soul have resonance, but what about listening to God? Still, speakers like Laloux touch a chord in humanity and I applaud him for his attempt to offer a hopeful vision. He cries out for a world that values people, and recognises that we could work together better to achieve more. In that space of hope a spiritual journey is signaled as a pathway to change. My position is to suggest that there is more to such yearning than many realise. The desire for genuine transformation is achievable, but not by humanity operating independently from God. My research has attempted to address what spiritual reality is about, and I have examined the details of how it might work in organizations. It is not a simple area to address but I hope that the portrayal of my own wrestling with faith, and practice, will have some impact in this space, if not directly, then indirectly.

I appreciate that the clarity I have reached for myself about the centrality of Jesus Christ may be unsettling for some in the world of SAW, for example the BASS (British Association for the Study of Spirituality) community, who are open to people of all faiths and none as both seekers and dwellers. The culture of the West has become doubtful of the authority of God as sovereign Lord to such an extent that people struggle to understand the complexity of religious beliefs. A recent front page article in the Daily Telegraph reports there is ‘major confusion among the population (UK) about beliefs and what even constitutes religion’ (Bingham, 2015). This confusion is reflected in the workplace. Without understanding the value God gives to human beings, and the work of redemption through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we are inevitably at a loss when it comes to understanding how to counter damaging ideologies, beyond a general consensus that it is important to respect difference.

The daily challenge, which results from seeing all of life from an evangelical Christian perspective, is how to interpret it into leadership and working life. Runcorn (2011 [online]) brings some clarity:

the lived reality is that leadership is always embedded in the story of a community or institution and the challenges it is facing [...] Whatever their official title leaders must always find ways of negotiating the unofficial job description, the hidden anxieties that are actually driving it all – all those idealized hopes, unmet needs and unacknowledged ambitions [...] “Leading” and “being led” need discussing together. This is far more

than choosing which side to take or which party to vote for [...] it is about where our deepest sense of belonging, identity and community are to be found – and nearly everything in the national and international news at present is urgently posing this question.

(Runcorn, 2011, paragraphs 3, 5 & 6 [online])

He focuses attention on two key concepts: the gift of being led, and of being in community. Runcorn directs us towards loving personal relationship with a God who gently leads us, by the work of the Holy Spirit, towards loving relationships with those around us. The community aspect is deeply rooted in the life of the church which, in its best moments, models how to live in peace and care for one another's needs. I would like to explore the nature of community and what it means to be the church further.

Evangelical Christian spirituality presents the challenge that God is drawing us to himself. Having a relationship with Jesus Christ is what the Bible teaches essentially as God's way forward for humanity. The reality of Jesus Christ means Christians are challenged when it comes to communicating with those who hold different views, especially those of different faiths, or those with no faith. Ongoing exploration into the field is needed and there is much room for the FAW field to continue to develop. Miller (2007b) records four reasons for the failure to make more progress:

not serious enough engagement of the topic, either by theologians or laity; tensions between laity and clergy; improper understanding of the church as an institution; and lack of long term financial commitment to get new ventures underway.

(Miller, 2007b, p.58)

My research has made an effort at serious engagement with the topic from a lay perspective.

### **6.5 Limitations of my research and implications for future research**

My thesis has been inter-disciplinary to an extent, but has been limited in that it represents my personal journey. In recognizing myself as an evangelical Christian, I have investigated why personal faith is important to me. I have observed differences of interpretation amongst Christians, and shown why I need to reflect my understanding of my evangelical Christian faith in my working life. Further research could examine other Christian perspectives, and different interpretations of being Christian. In particular, exploration of how spiritual formation is supported within differing church communities would be useful. Through the varieties of expression of the Christian faith there is scope for further cross-disciplinary research into how Christian spirituality is developed, and the impact of this on our work. This can be explored in relation to the fields of theology and organizational development.

My research investigated how the HDM can be framed from my evangelical Christian perspective to develop it as a tool to support spiritual transformation in relation to work. This research is limited in that I have not tested out my newly devised CDM as a tool for spiritual formation, and this presents an area for further research. Spiritual formation is commonly understood to be supported through the use of spiritual direction, whilst coaching and mentoring are approaches more commonly found in organizations. It would be useful to assess how spiritual direction compares with spiritual mentoring, and coaching, in more depth. I have examined how my approach to spiritual mentoring has worked to support spiritual formation in a limited range of situations. Demonstrating how spiritual mentoring can be valuable for Christians in relation to their work is a source of continuing inquiry.

My work to support spiritual formation has been impactful for individual leaders but has only taken place in a handful of organizational contexts. This research is limited in that it has not examined the influence of spiritual formation in more organizations. Further research could examine how Christian spirituality might influence other organizational contexts. In addition, it may be possible for others to adapt my methodological approach in order to examine their own spiritual position, and its effect in particular organizations. Further case studies, similar to that of the ACC, may help to generate questions that challenge assumptions within the SAW field. My ACC case study illuminated for me the question: Why is it that some can acknowledge Christ whilst others do not? This huge question about our ability to be responsive to God is one I have not been able to examine.

I have challenged some of the generalized assumptions within the SAW field. My research may generate new questions about the personal nature of faith for researchers and practitioners who are advocates for spirituality in the workplace. Perhaps even the question of: Is there a place for a generalised notion of spirituality in work at all? I have recognized that sustaining my own spiritual integrity is a fundamental priority in my work as a professional consultant. My inquiry has shown that it is important to examine one's own personal spiritual beliefs; other SAW researchers may find an autoethnographic approach helpful for this purpose. I have located my understanding of myself within historical considerations of Christianity (although I did not offer a comprehensive historical assessment). As I continue to examine my own spiritual life, I would suggest that researchers in the SAW field may do well to interrogate their own stance and perspective, and look at their own assumptions and prejudices, in light of a broader cultural and historical context.

## 6.6 Conclusion

I have moved around in the SAW field, first embracing, then critiquing and being distant from it, as I found the pluralistic and syncretistic nature of SAW difficult. Spirituality is an umbrella term which encompasses many different beliefs, and disciplines, which can influence our motives and behaviour; I have developed an understanding of my own spiritual position by going deeper into my own faith. I understand evangelical Christian spirituality as a post-conversion journey by which Christians can grow in holiness. I want to be a Christian in the way I have framed it, and become better skilled at 'speaking the truth in love' (Ephesians 4.15) with those with whom I am brought into contact. I have recognised that I may be better suited to supporting Christians to explore how their work is a unique place for them to grow in relationship with God. Yet, with a clearer understanding of grace, I think I am now better equipped for my encounters with people who are of all faiths and none.

The starting point of my research was to explore my practice in order to find a way to support people in work from my considered engagement with Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality is not an escape from the world; rather, action in the world is an important aspect of Christian spirituality. Wakefield (2001) sums up the influential theologian Augustine's wisdom 'all Christians are called to live successfully the two lives of action and contemplation' (Wakefield, 2001, p.49). Christians can come to recognise that their work is set in the wider context of their life in Christ, as Hopler (2012 [online]) stated:

If you're a Christian, God has called you to be a change agent wherever you go. Your story is so much more than your personal life; it's a vital part of the greater story of what God is doing in the world.  
(Hopler, 2012, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph [online])

The essence of my research journey has been about drawing on an evangelical Christian perspective in order to be such a change agent. I have sought to be a catalyst for personal spiritual growth in relation to work.

My position about faith and leadership has changed, and I have come to understand faith as being of primary importance, whereas leadership may or may not be part of someone's calling and gifting. However, leadership exposes a person's real character and that is why it is important for those who are leaders to attend to the spiritual life. My research has helped me to appreciate that Christian spirituality is not homogenous, and leadership development is, similarly, not simplistic. Yet my resolve to deepen awareness of the presence of God at work, by encouraging spiritual formation as a central focus of the leadership journey, has been

strengthened. The area of how best to influence organizations is complex, but Christians have a moral and social responsibility to enact change in society (Bosch, 1991). Evangelical Christians are called to engage in transformative work.

Benner suggests that Christians affirm an incarnational identity that is unique in the marketplace of spiritualities (Benner, 2004); evangelical Christian spirituality involves turning to Jesus Christ. If someone is genuinely looking for God, then I believe God meets with them; my understanding is that such an encounter will reveal something of God's character. As part of this revelation, we begin to know God who is described as 'one Spirit and one Lord' in Ephesians 4.4-6. God, in fact, wants us to know Him, and the truth of Jesus is central to this profound spiritual journey. The New Testament states that eternal life involves knowing 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ' (John 17.3). So if Jesus is not known, it seems, in my opinion, to suggest that the person's spiritual journey is incomplete. This may be contentious for those on a different path, but it is spiritual reality from an evangelical Christian perspective. Christians may not be perfect as they seek to follow Christ and it is important, therefore, to be open to learning as an aspect of the faith journey. As we learn, we need to respect those who may be on a different journey to us, in other faiths, at the same time as sharing our experience of Christ with them. We can also be respectful of ecumenical difference, knowing that the Spirit is endlessly creative. We may understand our own spiritual *habitus* more clearly as we engage with such differences.

As a spiritual mentor I need to learn to love like God loves, since everyone is made in the image of God. I continue to learn how to be led by the Holy Spirit so that I can be an instrument of God's grace in another's life. I also continue to learn how to be supportive within the community of the evangelical church where the Kingdom of God is freely being made known to all who wish to explore it. I see the church, and spiritual mentoring, as vehicles for growth in our understanding of God, and how to discern His presence in the whole of life. I aim to continue to 'grow in grace and knowledge' (2 Peter 3.18).

Wakefield (2001) describes Bonaventure's belief that 'reality is spiritual and intellectual, and demands the mental effort of philosophy' (Wakefield, 2001, p.57). I have grappled in these domains, but am mindful of the advice given by the Apostle Paul:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.

(Colossians 2.8)

Jesus Christ is our highest aim, and:

the knowledge of God [...] is better and nobler than intellectual research. The goal is union with God in love [...] This has a hiddenness and is beyond words.

(Wakefield, 2001, p.57)

My concluding hope is that the words in my thesis will pave a way for others to investigate their own understanding of what the Christian faith offers. For me it is an all encompassing daily reality, my *habitus*, by which I am continually being led into a deeper walk with the resurrected and living Jesus Christ. There is a truth of loving grace at the heart of this relationship which provides me with strength for each day, direction for my life, and hope for all the brokenness which I see in the world, particularly in our places of work.

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## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

ACC – A Christian Charity

AI – Appreciative Inquiry

BASS – British Association for the Study of Spirituality

CDM – Christian Development Model

EPICC – Ecumenical Partnerships Initiatives Compassion in Change (aka Workplace Matters)

FAW – Faith At Work, interchangeable with SAW

HDM – Holistic Development Model

HR – Human Resources

JMSR – Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion

MSR – Management, Spirituality and Religion

OD – Organization Development

QR – Qualitative Research

SAW - Spirit at Work, also known as Spirituality in the Workplace, or Workplace Spirituality;  
can be known as Faith at Work (FAW)

SCM – Social Capital Model

SLJ – Spirit (L)ed Journey

TAR – Theological Action Research

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Case Study of ACC Masterclass**

#### **1.1 Key to characters**

ACC-X – Federation of charities with a Christian heritage and ethos

ACC-Y – National body and centre for affiliation

ACC – A Christian Charity, anonymised, simplified organization title for ease of reference

LDS – Leadership Development Strategy created by ACC-Y

AB – Associate with leading business school

CB - Client manager from leading business school working with ACC-Y

DB - Director and CEO of Consultancy and Talent Development at the business school

CT - CEO of Training at ACC

#### **1.2 Background context**

ACC-X is a federation of charities with a Christian heritage and ethos. Each of the charities affiliates to the national body ACC-Y. A recent focus on good leadership had led to the development of a Leadership Development Strategy (LDS), commissioned jointly by the national body ACC-Y and a network of ACC-X CEOs, and drawn up by a leading business school. For the purposes of this case study the client is referred to simply as ACC. The LDS strategy was due to be presented at a meeting of the National Council of ACC on 19 November, 2011.

As part of the LDS design phase it was agreed to run a pilot leadership development programme and a key recommendation for this pilot was to offer two masterclasses for current and aspiring leaders. The first masterclass offered, on enterprise and innovation, had been put together by AB, an Associate with the business school, who had been very much involved in creating the LDS with the ACC. It also featured involvement by one of the ACC's CEO's as well as an external 'expert'. However, the first masterclass did not run due to lack of participant sign up. There was, therefore, a focus of attention on ensuring that the second masterclass, which had been signposted as being about 'faith and leadership', was able to be piloted before the national council meeting so that the concept of offering 'masterclasses' could be reviewed.

The interest in 'faith and leadership' as a topic that the ACC wished to explore had arisen from an internal survey, and this had been written up in the LDS consultation document. Two current needs had been expressed by leaders in this area (emphasis mine):

1. Provide a place to consider the impact that the *individual's personal faith* can have on their leadership within the ACC movement
2. Have a strong focus on the ethos and what *it means to be a faith-based organization*: help leaders to reflect on the ACC mission and impact from a *theological and faith perspective*.

The 'masterclass' format was understood to be offering 'thought leadership' on the topic. CB was the business school client manager working in partnership with the ACC. She asked DB, Director and CEO of Consultancy and Talent Development at the business school, for a recommendation re: a delivery partner for the second masterclass.

#### Learning Reflection

*The 'masterclass' format was un-proven concept in this context. It would have been helpful to follow the 'blueprint' underpinning the design of masterclass one, where an ACC CEO had been involved, to support the design and delivery of the second masterclass. This would have enabled the session to be tied into to current concerns and existing knowledge within the organization. The delivery of any intervention requires contextual research to ensure that the design of an event is effective.*

Parallel to the business school's work with the ACC, DB had been in contact with the Director of EPICC, Yvonne Roland, and Senior Consultant, Sue Howard. They had met in March, 2011 to discuss the potential offering of EPICC and how it was distinctive. DB, who knew Sue from other networks, contacted Sue at the time when the business school consultants were looking for someone to run the 'Faith and Leadership' Masterclass to ask if she could recommend someone to deliver the workshop. Sue suggested she might be suitable to deliver it. As DB was shortly on vacation, it was a matter of some urgency to find a delivery partner quickly. DB invited EPICC to be a delivery partner. The general aim/outcome of the masterclass was agreed as: 'challenging the impact of their Christian faith on their style of leadership'.

#### Learning Reflection

*This was a significant step forward for EPICC as this was to be our first fee-paying client. EPICC had been developing its ethos and services over the course of 2011 which culminated in our*

*official 'launch' in November 2011. I offered to deliver the workshop because it seemed such an ideal opportunity to test out all the ideas/energy we had been working with in the background. So there was excitement about being invited to work with the business school and their client as well as some anxiety about 'doing a good job' and being invited back to do further work.*

### **1.3 Original design for the workshop**

In conversation with DB it was acknowledged that there was likely to be a broad spectrum of belief in the room. A group size of between 12 and 20 people was discussed. DB and Sue agreed that Sue would draw up a short overview of the masterclass for advertising purposes. Guidance as to the content/approach of the masterclass was described as it needing to include:

- A bit of theory – to provide knowledge to get everyone on the same page
- Something experiential and reflective

It was also suggested that some pre-reading would be helpful. Sue was given access to the LDS online. The overview of the masterclass which Sue created is attached as Appendix 2.

#### Learning Reflection

*In attempting to synthesise the ACC consultation document and the HDM I looked at their leadership personal qualities and re-arranged them in line with the dimensions of the HDM. See Appendix 3 which shows this analysis. This led to me later creating a handout which matched the ACC's definitions with the HDM Model. See Appendix 4.*

DB was happy with the overview Sue had created and it was sent to CT, CEO of Training at ACC for approval. CT was also happy with it. A flyer was then put together, based on the overview, and was intended to be used to attract those who had an interest in the area to sign up. The flyer explicitly highlighted that the masterclass was about *faith and leadership* and that the masterclass would explore:

- *How do you mix Christian leadership with business leadership*
- *What is distinctive about being a ACC leader, linked to faith and Christian Mission*

It also suggested that:

*'We will draw on a variety of leadership and Christian texts to provide a theoretical overview of...Christian faith and leadership. The workshop will then focus on how these concepts can be practically lived out within the lives of leaders in the ACC.'*

A date for the masterclass was set - 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2011.

### Learning Reflection

*I wondered about the client manager from the business school and was aware that she was not stepping in to take ownership of the relationship with EPICC, perhaps because she was not 'a Christian'. Given the concern that the second masterclass needed to be successful, I thought it odd that she did not contact EPICC consultants directly after our appointment to make sure she was happy to involve us and to talk through any issues. This would have been a helpful intervention, as we would have been able to ask questions about the survey results, and she could have shared her knowledge of the ACC leadership climate. She left DB to engage with John and I about delivery, although the ACC was not DB's client and she did not have much more information than we did about their internal landscape. Because the survey results had shown that interest was in the application of faith to leadership – our focus was very much on that, and the overview was designed to explore the links between leadership and Christian faith explicitly. This is very much in line with my 'expertise' in relation to my ongoing PhD work.*

*As my relationship with the business school and the client were both new, I did not feel confident about managing the relationship with CB, the client manager, and left it to DB to guide me as to the business school process around supplier/client relationships. As DB was going to be involved in delivery of the masterclass I made an assumption that she and CB would liaise together as needed.*

### **1.4 Shifts in arrangements**

Subsequently, Sue Howard, and another EPICC consultant, JK, were invited to a meeting (on 10 October) with key ACC Directors, to discuss the nature of the masterclass. CEO of ACC-Y, EC, and CEO of ACC Training, CT, were both present at this meeting, as well as AB and CB the two business school consultants, and DB (this was the one and only time I met CB). Other Directors involved in the LDS were also there.

At the meeting, Sue talked through the overview and EPICC's approach. The content was agreed as being necessary and suitable as 'there was more interest in a Christian masterclass' and the CEO of ACC -Y added that he wanted people to feel 'challenged and slightly uncomfortable' following their attendance at the workshop. There was some discussion of internal 'wrestling with theology' and the differences between evangelicals and more

moderate believers as to what a Christian leader is, as well as acknowledgement that there were some leaders who did not have a personal faith. Therefore they determined that the question needing to be addressed was 'What makes a good leader in a Christian organization' rather than 'What makes a good Christian leader'. The flyer was subsequently amended and replaced with the new question as its title. However, the content of the flyer, and therefore the workshop, was not seen at that point as needing to be revised or changed. (There was very little time to think it through given the imminent need to promote the event).

#### Learning Reflection

*I was given an updated Leadership, Qualities and Skills framework at this meeting which had a number of overlaps with the HDM which I had proposed using so I felt that there was some common ground with their culture. I also felt the meeting went really well – there seemed to be a lot of positive energy about the exploration of Christian faith and I came away confident that what EPICC could offer was very much aligned with their expressed wishes for the masterclass.*

Sue's booklet 'The Inner Life of a Christian Leader' was agreed as being suitable as recommended reading and, given the time-frame, these were to be handed out at the event.

#### Learning Reflection

*The booklet entitled 'The Inner Life of a Christian Leader' (Howard & Blakeley, 2010)<sup>65</sup> is overtly Christian and the acceptance of it as a suitable text to provide within ACC was further affirmation of the interest in exploring faith based leadership.*

EPICC were not involved in the arrangements of when/how the flyer was circulated or how many participants had shown an interest in the event before this meeting. But the focus of discussion moved to how to ensure people were going to be able to attend given their existing commitments and the short time frame for testing the pilot before the council meeting. It was felt the delivery date needed to be altered. It was decided that the masterclass would be offered as a 3 hour session during a forthcoming Chief Executive Networks meeting, to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> November. This meant that the people attending were essentially 'a captive audience',

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<sup>65</sup> Howard, S, and Blakeley, C, (2010), *The Inner Life of a Christian Leader*, L2, Cambridge: Grove Books

they had not signed up for the masterclass voluntarily, as in effect all conference goers would have to attend.

### Learning Reflection

*I was concerned about this change in the way the masterclass was being offered – both the nature of non-voluntary involvement and the size of the group. I had expressed these concerns to DB before the meeting (as there had been an advance email advising that a change in date might be needed), but nevertheless a pragmatic approach was adopted by the client and the business school didn't argue against it. Thus it seemed that the pressure of testing the masterclass format as a concept was a priority for all parties. But an important feature of the use of 'masterclasses', that individuals could voluntarily sign up for them, had been removed. Intuitively, I sensed there was inherent danger about this. I was also concerned that the masterclass was a success, as I had hoped that EPICC would be invited back in the future to facilitate them again. I felt that that potential quality of the offering was not being given sufficient consideration and I began to feel more nervous about the event.*

*The offering we had originally thought of making was for a maximum number of 20 people (and that was on the big side). The change to delivering a 'masterclass' for up to 40 CEO's was a different scenario – reducing in the process the type of dynamic and dialogue that might be created in the room on the day. It was also becoming a daunting prospect for me personally – especially as I had so little knowledge of the ACC climate, and have less confidence around delivery to large groups, I am more comfortable running workshops than addressing conferences.*

*I decided that I would call SC when I had got further forward in thinking through how to approach the workshop so that I could make a connection with her before the event, and in an attempt to gain a bit more understanding about the context. When I did call her, it was helpful in terms of making a personal connection but I didn't glean much more information than had already been shared. I asked her if she would like to be a facilitator, but she did not wish to be involved in that way expressing that she was looking forward to being a participant. She did mention again that there would be some there without Christian faith.*

## 1.5 Workshop planning

DB, and John and I met for a further planning meeting to discuss the presentation materials, which I had created, and the approach to the facilitation of the workshop.

During this meeting a number of things were agreed:

- DB would introduce the workshop
- An ice-breaker question would be used 'How have you experienced Christian Leadership' – to be discussed in pairs
- John would tell a story from his experience, and invite participants to share their experiences of Christian leadership to get a sense of the issues that might be emerging in the room
- SH to present theoretical slides – we went through the slides and some changes were made to reduce the volume, and maintain a focus on leadership theory and use of the HDM

### Learning Reflection

*It had taken me a considerable amount of time to discern how to condense leadership theory into an introductory session. I felt I had been able to thread core concepts together but was hoping that DB and John would either validate or suggest changes from their own insights to leadership. I didn't detect any strong feelings against what I had pulled together – more suggestions as to how to shorten the session, or work with the material. So this led me to think that at least the content was 'on the mark' – the issue was more about how to present what we had in the space of time we had available.*

We talked through various ways we had come up with of working e.g. Small Groups to explore each pathway.

- Exercise One would be to work on: 'How is our Christian Faith being lived out in us'
  - Looking at Inspiration/Spirituality
  - Developing Inner Self
  - Unity with Others
  - Reality

Exercise Two would be to work on: 'How does my faith influence ACC mission and impact'

- Ideal
- Expressing full potential
- Service to others

- Holistic view – taking everything into account what are the leadership formation areas I need to give attention to at this time

We would work in groups of three to address various questions; different groups would work on different pathways; their responses would be written on post-it notes, or coloured card.

#### Learning Reflection

*With hindsight, I think we had come up with quite a good design, even if the questions might have been a bit exclusive. We had worked this up together and had designed a good small group session. What happened subsequently led John and I to amend the design and it was not quite as well understood by us all. I remember DB saying she thought we had incorporated small group sessions and we had, but in the end we did not use them.*

#### **1.6 Working with the creators of the HDM**

EPICC had been ‘forming’ since 2010 and we had reached a point where we felt able to host some launch events. These were timed to coincide with the visit of the creator of the HDM, Dr. Marjo Lip-Wiersma, to the UK. She was here with her business partner and co-author of ‘The Map of Meaning’ (2011, the book is about the HDM). Marjo and Lani were invited to be guest speakers at our main launch event, held at St. Alban’s Abbey, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November (a week before the ACC workshop).

Following the launch EPICC consultants had a one day workshop led by Marjo and Lani. John and I shared our proposed approach with them, and two other EPICC consultants present, to gain their input. Marjo was doubtful of the need to use so many theory slides at the outset – believing passionately that the model does the work on its own.

#### Learning Reflection

*As I had spent so much time working on the slides, I was resistant to hearing this and justified it by arguing that the business school required it as part of the masterclass format. At this late stage (the masterclass being only one week away) it felt ‘panicky’ to start making significant changes. In retrospect, I realise that Marjo was probably right. I realise now that fear was an undercurrent in my decision making – I was fearful of standing in front of a large group without slides to lean on. Even though I know power point presentations do not yield much learning and also that my own presentational style is not particularly extravert. Because there was ambiguity in the client relationship (EPICC were working as suppliers to the business school, not*

*directly for the ACC); I was complying with the need for ‘a bit of theory’ and a ‘masterclass’ concept (with the notion of ‘expert’ lingering in the background). If I had been more directly engaged with the ACC relationship I would have been more at liberty to hold the ground for a smaller scale workshop and the creation of dialogue – an environment in which I am much more at home. I felt I was operating at the edges of my comfort zone on a number of fronts – but still optimistic, because of the Christian nature of the content and client environment, that things would work out.*

Our discussion produced some new insights about ways of using the model:

- When it came to working with the ACC using the HDM it was felt it would be valuable to have an example for each of the spaces (this would have been useful, I am not sure we took this up)

Marjo suggested that:

- It would be helpful to ask questions first, then present the model.

We came up with some questions that Marjo and Lani have found useful:

*A. How do you find meaning yourself?*

- Where have you found meaning in your work in the last week or two
- Who are you becoming as a result of your work
- How are you contributing to the world

Their responses would help us to understand their issues.

JK and SH would explain the HDM:

- Why this model? Because in meaning we are all leaders.
- Benefits of HDM? It give us:
  - Structure to talk about this area
  - Axis to be working between inspiration and reality
  - Constructive, hopeful view of humanity
  - Opportunity to take responsibility

Then we could explore with participants where they would place various different aspects in the model from an organizational perspective:

*B. How do you help your people to find meaning?*

- How do you find meaning as a team
- How do you help young people to find meaning

- What things enable us to find meaningful work and what things distract us? (What things block meaning?)

As a result of this workshop John and I made a few changes to the way we thought we would work with the model. We added a five minute prayerful reflection, followed by the opportunity to address the question ‘What did I do or experience in my work in the past week or two that was meaningful to me’, then introduced the model. We used a few standard exercises (tried and tested) to draw participants experientially into the model. (The slide presentation has been anonymised to accompany this case study is contained as Appendix 7).

### Learning Reflection

*It was left to me to finalise the approach we would use. This last minute tweaking on my own was probably not the best preparation. I had felt much more grounded after the session where DB and JK and I had talked through the whole thing and agreed on it. In retrospect, this tweaking of the workshop left me feeling a bit less sure of myself – it was slightly experimental and I felt burdened by the responsibility of holding the whole thing together.*

### **1.7 The masterclass – my recollections**

The event was run at Milton Keynes in a room which was rather awkward from the point of view of having two white screens which were behind the presenters and this made it difficult to know where to stand and which side of the room to talk to. Our session was put back by about an hour due to a national business meeting and a time of ‘devotions’. So by the time we began the 30 or so CEOs and board members had been sitting and listening for about an hour. DB made the sensible decision to start with a coffee break! The session was later described as being ‘Very long, very tiring’ and I think this wasn’t helped by tacking it onto an hour long business meeting at the front end.

The session began as planned with an introduction from DB followed by John asking the question ‘How have you experienced Christian Leadership’ which produced a range of responses. I then was invited to begin my presentation. I didn’t sense any particular disengagement, but it was from time to time tricky to move the slides forward behind me which lead to one or two ‘technically challenged’ moments. In addition, I used a microphone as in the past I have had feedback about being too softly spoken. When I broke from talking to share the ‘mobius strip’ activity I thought there was quite high energy about doing this and

some laughter. And I recall DB saying something like –‘that was good’. I was somewhat aware that time was slipping more than I had hoped.

At some point there was a pivotal moment when someone asked whether the ACC was a Christian organization? I acknowledged this as an important dynamic and believe a short discussion was held re: this being something that was necessary for the ACC to resolve but I didn’t stop to really spend time on this as I was conscious of wanting to move into work with the HDM. In retrospect, I should have taken the time to allow more discussion in the room as this was such a core point.

When we got to the short time of personal prayer, John whispered in my ear that he felt it was important to deal with some of the questions that had come up and he then led a further short session around this. I had noticed that there was some talking during the time of ‘prayer’ and I was quite surprised that people didn’t value this reflective space as well as I had anticipated. From this point I raced through the slides to introduce the sections of the model and left people with the opportunity to write on the flip charts around the room. People were really keen to have a break and I had kept them going perhaps a bit too long which was out of character for me but I was so conscious of the time pressure. During the tea break (which had been so late coming that I didn’t manage to even get a drink as the venue organizers were quick to tidy it away. I don’t know whether others missed drinks?) I connected with a couple of people in the corridor, one of whom was going to be taking up the responsibility for Christian Spiritual Development. They acknowledged that there were historically internal difficulties around ‘being a Christian organization’ and I felt that at least some of what I had stirred up was hitting the mark from the point of view of the issues facing them in terms of being ‘good leaders’ in a Christian organization. It felt frustrating however, that I had not found out enough about the different views on this in the room both prior to the workshop, and during the times of debate when not everyone had spoken up.

By this time I felt the energy in the room had somewhat changed and I was really wanting to get people engaged in the model as I knew how insightful it could be. Whilst some people participated, I noticed that others were not writing on the flip charts and it felt quite hard to focus the group around the experiential aspect of the model (I had laid it out on the floor in a very small space).

However, I was pleased with the insights that did emerge (see Appendix 5) and I felt that it was becoming clear how the model could be used to help think through leadership challenges.

At the end of the workshop, there was a short feedback session in which one person was quite vocal about how he felt the session had made him feel excluded. I was sorry that he felt this way, but also felt that his input at this stage was slightly dysfunctional. With such a large amount of people it was difficult to pick up on body language etc. During the flip chart exercise DB, John and had gone around the room table by table to talk through some of the ideas with people...at the tables I visited there seemed to be mostly engagement with the task. If the other facilitators had noticed anything different they hadn't shared it with me.

There was insufficient time to pursue emerging insights in much depth and the workshop came to an end with DB making sure that the feedback sheets were filled in.

Physically, as the session came to an end, I felt quite exhausted by standing and talking and suddenly realised I felt faint and drained of energy. I had to eat a snack bar I had in my handbag to try and get back some equilibrium. Consequently, I wasn't paying complete attention to the names of people who came up to talk to us at the end. Mainly, evangelical Christians who expressed some support for what we had attempted to achieve and one of whom said he would like to use the model with his own Board.

### **1.8 Processing the feedback**

As we began to read the feedback sheets I recognised, with a sinking feeling, that the workshop (and myself as lead facilitator) had not been as well received as I had hoped. A summary of the feedback is provided in Appendix 6.

Kirkpatrick (2006)<sup>66</sup> suggests there are four levels to the evaluation of any training intervention. These are:

#### Level 1: Reaction

To what degree participants react favourably to the training

#### Level 2: Learning

To what degree participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, and commitment based on their participation in a training event

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<sup>66</sup> Kirkpatrick, D L, & Kirkpatrick, J, D, (2006), *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler

### Level 3: Behaviour

To what degree participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job

### Level 4: Results

To what degree targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training event and subsequent reinforcement

The feedback sheets mainly monitor the level 1 area of evaluation.

What initially strikes me from the feedback is that given the mixed nature of expectations about the master-class that existed it was natural that some needs would be met, whilst others not.

There seem to be a variety of themes by which the workshop can be analysed.

1. *The masterclass concept* - was it a helpful learning approach
2. *The value of the theoretical content* – receptivity to ideas
3. *The value of the HDM* – did people engage with it
4. *The Christian emphasis* – the ambiguity around interpreting what Christianity is and means for leaders
5. *The contextualisation of the content* for the audience
6. *The facilitation style* – presenter's capacity to deliver and enable learning

The workshop seemed to create extremes of response in some of these categories.

#### *1.8.1 The masterclass concept*

To assess the value of the masterclass concept there are some underpinning criticisms which are partly to do with format and process. Here are some of the concerns:

- Shorter...input session. Proper break half-way through.
- Opportunity for more audience participation and engagement.
- Shorter teaching blocks, giving complex ideas, then allowing space to wrestle.
- Too much theory – more time needed to put theory into practice – more practical sessions
- The audience was too large, discussion was dominated by a few 'loud mouths'.
- Clearer identification of the purpose of the masterclass – identifying key learning.
- Early (theory) too long and too dry. More examples please.

And with regard to the sign up nature of the original concept of masterclasses many had not grasped the parameters of the event:

- I have not understood why the original masterclass date was changed.
- I didn't know it was happening
- I had no prior expectations of this class
- Not wholly sure (what I hoped to gain) as a late entrant
- (I will) be very careful to ensure that I understand the intended content before attending another (masterclass)

### *1.8.2 The value of the theoretical content*

However, despite the theory being seen by some as too long, others found it of value. Section 2 shows that 12 people felt there to be 'some new ideas and thinking'. Comments include:

- I am completing a Doctorate researching the Christian basis of the ACC in relation to inclusivity. I found it interesting. I will reference it in my thesis
- Some of the concepts were sound and helpful
- The masterclass gave me some helpful tools to examine (my role as CEO and newcomer to the ACC movement) further, but no easy answers
- Sue was clearly very knowledgeable from an academic point of view
- A lot of very academic content
- I will reflect on the material covered
- Some good ideas and challenge thinking
- Early dialogue on Western, too long and too dry – more EXAMPLES please

### *Learning Reflection*

*The idea of using 'a bit of theory' as part of the masterclass was not well defined. The use of theory was not grasped well and there was more interest in practical application of ideas and examples. I recognised that I had too many slides. It would have been more helpful for me if the intervention had been framed as a 'workshop' which would have freed me to set up greater scope for participant involvement than I did. I feel I should have known this from prior experience.*

### *Learning Reflection*

*There was very little engagement with the presentation of theory. Whilst that may have been partly down to my presentation style, I feel that the room was more activist oriented and*

*needed/wanted more conversation and engagement with their own ideas, experiences and challenges.*

### *1.8.3 The value of the HDM*

The HDM has the capacity to provide audience participation and engagement. The session could have been constructed entirely around it, using it to draw out leadership challenges and to support shared meaning around concepts. The model however was introduced after the theory section and after some controversy regarding the Christian nature of the ACC had already taken place. It was therefore not in a good position in the running order to extract the most value and there was not sufficient time to demonstrate how insightful it can be.

This session with the model received mixed feedback:

- The model was confusing – needs me to think more! (NB: This may not be a bad thing; it could be the model opened up areas of exploration that were unfamiliar)
- I didn't buy into the model as I was not engaged in the presentation (unfortunately the theory introduction lost this person and they disengaged thereafter)
- The model does not celebrate diversity when introduced from a wholly Christian perspective. I don't think I fully understood the model as I disengaged from the presentation.

But some people clearly did understand it and found it helpful:

- (I will) use the holistic development model
- (I will) reflect on the outcomes of the model
- (I will) reflect on the model
- (I) might use tool in some way with staff
- (I will) explore with senior team
- (I will) speak to senior staff about their thoughts on this

### *Learning Reflection*

*How I wish I had had the courage of my convictions. I agree with the participants about the need for greater conversation and sharing of perspectives. I know that the model creates a space for this to happen. We might not have had to move into the explicit tensions of 'being Christian' if I had allowed meanings to emerge from the group using the model. The one thing Christian 'talk' does is create division and difference, when in truth the real message of Christ is*

*inclusivity! I am so frustrated that I did not invoke a positive environment with people who so clearly needed to air what was important for them as CEOs.*

Despite the feedback, it is clear from the actual reflections that emerged during the exercises that some profound insights were called forth as Appendix 5 clearly demonstrates. And some participants concluded from the session that they would:

- (Do) spiritual development
- Be more devoted

#### *1.8.4 The Christian emphasis*

There were clearly issues with nature of ACC as a 'Christian' organization. The mix in the room between Christians and non-Christians was a significant factor in levels of engagement. The question 'what makes a good leader in a Christian organization' remains un-resolved for the ACC. The feedback captures some of the tension:

- (There was a desire to have) examples of guidance of how good leadership can be applied to a Christian organization – focused on Christian leadership instead
- The masterclass was actually on how to be a Christian within an organization

Yet an expectation for the masterclass was that it would be about how:

- To further explore the topics of Christian leadership
- Hear from others how they felt about leadership as Christians

So whilst there was a strong interest amongst the Christians for a Christian input, with hopes that the masterclass:

- (be a) National leadership discussion which opens us discussion on the importance of Christian identity within the development of leadership of a Christian organization
- Help to bring a clearer view of Christianity within the organization/movement

And would be about

- (helping me to) gain an insight into how we deal with both being leaders in a Christian organization and being a Christian leader.
- Being a Christian leader in a Christian organization – shared understanding, shared vision, toolkit

The range of different perspectives made it difficult to engage with this at an appropriate level for everyone in the room.

An important element of tension, and a possible future aim for work in this area, was expressed in the expectations, as:

- Exploration of leadership in a Christian organization in the context of ACC's inclusive practice, people of all faiths and none, are welcome and active in the movement.
- Chance for people to reflect on why they work for a Christian organization and what individually they can offer to understanding of the Christian ethos.
- I hoped it would engage us with how all leaders, people of faith and not, lead and lead well in a Christian organization.
- (We need to) keep pushing the notion that the answer lies in Christians and non-Christians finding a new place, new language, new understanding.

It is the nature of inclusivity which emerged as being a bone of contention for leaders in the room with Evangelical Christians and non-Christians being in polarity around this issue. (The doctoral student observer is exploring the historical basis of the ACC in relation to inclusivity and should have some valuable insights to offer on this matter).

Clearly for those of 'non-faith' the content was problematic:

- Make it clearer that those of no faith are welcome
- I was completely excluded as I am not a Christian
- It is a problem starting from an assumption of Christianity and jargon and values. What bonds the movement is people wanting to help young people improve their lives. The main motivation is not the C thing.
- I fear it had the effect of making those who do not fit a particular mould of 'Christian' feeling....not very good.
- It may help you to know that I am not a Christian
- The structure was difficult for a less Christian person

In addition, a couple of comments demonstrated that for some their interest in leadership was much more focused on the organization. Expressed as wanting:

- Understanding/debate/discussion about what it is to lead a Christian organization
- I hoped it would illuminate the very present challenge of driving forward a Christian organization in the modern eclectic world

The difficulty is partly also around the comprehension of the word 'Christian' which can mean different things to different people. One person expressed their awareness of this complexity:

It was a little exclusive – no appreciation of the range of positions on a Christian journey. Leadership is also a very broad and hard to define concept – between the two, there is a wealth of potential misunderstanding!

The challenge was summed up in one comment: This was a difficult and challenging subject. And a useful question emerged: Is the best way to be/lead a Christian organization *really* to be a better/more thoughtful Christian?

### Learning Reflection

*The last question is so interesting. It seems like the ACC is full of paradox. From a very explicit Christian foundation, it has morphed into a large, global, association of people who share similar values but not necessarily arriving at those values as a result of faith. So the question about 'good leadership' remains values driven and depends on the interpretation each leader has about what it means to be a Christian organization. Which part of the equation do they want to emphasise? Good Leader, Christian, Organization? There are many generic, and context specific, interpretations of good leadership – but when it is within a Christian environment another dimension, is also present, that of how a relationship with God is enacted. Because of the historical and ongoing ethos this dimension needs to be incorporated within the life of the organization somehow.*

### 1.8.5 Contextualisation of the content

One of the main pitfalls in the workshop was that the presenters did not have sufficient insight into the operations of the ACC. This problem could have been greatly alleviated if the masterclass had been co-designed and facilitated with an internal ACC person. Many comments revealed this was necessary and would have been helpful:

- I thought there was possibly an absence of understanding of previous articulation of the Christian basis of the movement (i.e. greater knowledge would have improved the theoretical material and grounded the discussion in our collective practice).
- More research was required before delivery
- All ACC's are different but the assumption was that we were all in the same place.
- I did feel that there were other people here who could have led a more dynamic session and understood us better.
- I wonder if the brief and context of ACC movement was clear for you as organizers and facilitators

- Wrong assumptions
- Please listen more carefully to the brief and engage presenters who have more empathy with the audience

### Learning Reflection

*Given the short time frames and the centrality of the business school as the main point of contact with the client, I do feel that the client manager and the internal sponsors could have done more to support the design of what was being covered in such a key part of the pilot leadership programme. In fact upon reflection, it is more than surprising that there was such a hands-off approach – particularly as this is such a critical area of importance in more ways than one. Given that this is a difficult and challenging area, a masterclass of this type was probably not the most suitable forum for these issues to be aired.*

*There is certainly ambiguity in the organization about what Christian Spirituality is, and its value to the organization and the communities it serves. The Christian message does create conflict (Luke 12:51) and so part of the paradox lies in the nature of what it means to be Christian. Following the workshop, the new Executive for Spiritual Development kindly shared with me an MA thesis, by Jacky Bone, which looked at: What are the key issues facing the English ACC in the twenty-first century as it seeks to work out its Christian mission (and how does the role of chaplaincy contribute to its vision to be a Christian Movement)? This document gives many helpful insights, not least that the tension between Christians and non-Christians in the movement has long historical roots and previous research undertaken by the Grubb Institute revealed that ‘there was a fear of openly debating the issue because it was felt it would cause division’ and yet that ‘it is essential that open debate around...theological issues takes place’.*

*Without wishing to make excuses, I did feel a bit ‘set up to fail’ coming in as an outsider for a three hour session that really could not hope to resolve these underlying issues. The dynamics of 40 Senior Leaders with strong views did create conflict and this could have been foreseen and worked with differently if there had been greater engagement between all parties involved in the masterclass.*

### 1.8.6 The facilitation style

It was clear from the feedback that the presentation style and structure of the event was less than effective.

#### Learning Reflection

*There is also the question of why such high level leaders did not speak up about their levels of disengagement more fully so they could have achieved better value in terms of learning for themselves, rather than let the afternoon go to waste? E.g. 'I sat around for 3 hours wondering what the point of the afternoon was.' Perhaps as a senior leader they could have said something? Unfortunately, there is no getting away from the fact that our presentation style and the structure of the event was less than inspiring. In my defence, I am very aware that I am not the most gifted presenter and really do not enjoy large group work. I offered to do the work on the basis that it would be a workshop for a maximum of 20 people, and would be around Christian leadership. By the time the event came around the goal posts had shifted considerably and left me in a situation in which I was not playing to my strengths. We tried to meet the brief, but failed to provide sufficient and robust space for group work and dialogue – which actually we would wish to include much more of. We made the mistake of filling the time with too much content. We would have been better just setting off group discussions.*

*Whilst my colleague provided a different style of delivery (and some light relief), upon reflection, it might have been helpful if the business school consultant had stepped in to support the creation of dialogue too. However, I sense that she was as much surprised as we were by the feedback sheets as, like us, she had not detected such a high degree of dis-functionality, which they seem to indicate.*

Some of the feedback makes for painful reading:

#### *Teaching Style -*

- The session lacked the spark to really inspire and encourage, although some of the concepts were sound and helpful.
- Very little passion coming through
- I feel the session lacked spark
- Teaching style was a bit boring and although challenging us to think of Christian faith it was not clear
- Death by PowerPoint, lack of eye contact

- Learn how to connect with audience
- I learn better in a more dynamic teaching environment

*Participation and Engagement -*

- Too much initial theory and reading the detailed PowerPoint slides detracted from the opportunity for more audience participation and engagement
- I was not engaged in the presentation. I felt uninspired and bored. The pace was too slow.
- No attempt was made to encourage those who did not say anything to contribute.
- At times the masterclass was extremely hard work to remain engaged – no interesting debate on subject matter
- Could have done with more interaction
- Really struggled to engage, didn't feel able to contribute.

*Structure and Room Management –*

- Clear identification of the purpose of the masterclass – identifying key learning (*although, to be fair, the learning outcomes had been identified on the flyer; however, they needed to be re-iterated at the beginning of the session as not everyone had seen them!*)
- Broaden into two clear blocks would have been better.
- Probably needs more time and space and ventilation
- Ability to work with technology
- The length of the session really needs a more dynamic approach.

*The event could have been improved by -*

- Shorter more engaging input session.
- Need to adapt the material as the session progressed
- More time needed to put theory into practice – more practical sessions
- Shorter teaching blocks, giving complex ideas then allowing space to wrestle
- Less reading of PowerPoint slides – rather use them as a launch pad for ideas
- Talking in Groups was the most helpful (*so therefore more of this needed*). More EXAMPLES.
- More use of small group discussion plus feedback to main plenary would have improved this dramatically

Whilst we did pick up on some questions and gave some time for them to be discussed this was not perceived as being sufficient:

- The presenters need to adapt when challenged
- People (need to) listen to us and adapt the programme – the team need to adapt the masterclass ‘live’ in relation to the needs of the audience
- None of the excellent points raised were taken on board and the facilitators blindly carried on with the planned programme disregarding what were 2 great opportunities to make it more relevant and accessible to the ACC.

### Learning Reflection

*This is probably the feedback that hits the mark the most. I am very disappointed that we did not take advantage of what we had stirred up in the room by the questions that did emerge. I felt at the time that we had held a discussion about them – but it’s clear that this did not penetrate the issues in the room sufficiently well. The big lesson I will take away from this event is to always ensure there is sufficient small group and plenary feedback time to deal with issues that emerge from the group. And if necessary, to ‘deviate’ from my planned approach in order to enable this to happen.*

### **1.9 Post-event discussions and learning arising**

There was much analysis of the event after it had taken place which included:

- An initial de-brief in the pub between DB, John and I
- Further conversation between myself and John
- Email reflections – with DB and with the new Executive for Spiritual Development
- A telephone conversation between myself and DB
- A telephone conversation between myself and CT
- And other conversations were held between CB, DB and CT and the HR person which I was not privy to.

Interestingly those who had been present in the room from among ACC sponsors also did not think the event had been as poor as the feedback sheets seemed to indicate. They in fact thought the content was good. They felt that it was essentially the ‘wrong audience’ in terms of the size, mix and timing. However, some of the learning points arising included those already mentioned: the need for more plenary and small group discussion; the focus on good leadership rather than Christian organization (the title of the flyer had changed but not the content); the need to pick up more fully on learning in the room. Given that the format had been partly about piloting a masterclass they recognised the need to define more clearly what

that meant, and if so, then they would need a different person with large group skills to deliver it.

The internal sponsor suggested that there were some good things emerging. The masterclass had dealt with 'the most significant topic', 'head on'. And the question what does it mean to be a Christian organization is important especially with the more inclusive acceptance of 'all faiths and none'. The event had generated internal conversations and was still being talked about. It was perplexing for me to recognise that the workshop had been driven by internal demand, but the positioning of the workshop (as part of an annual network conference) led people to attend who would not have naturally selected to come along. The recognition of the organization's very disparate faith stances was unlikely to lead to an easy 'masterclass' environment and in fact the subject area would be better approached by leaders in a retreat environment where there could be greater time for reflection, prayer and discernment.

As to approach towards learning, it was remarked that 'ACC leaders don't read much'. So there was not so much requirement for theory. It was also acknowledged that the participants had had very little in the way of briefing or preparation as the masterclass had had so little time to be promoted before the event itself. There was support for the use of the Holistic Development Model as it helped to articulate the particular leadership challenges and it was suggested that I would be invited to meet the new Director of Leadership Development who was currently being recruited and would be appointed in the new year. I found this a very encouraging expression of support that the masterclass, whilst imperfect, was not entirely without value. The contact with the new Executive of Spiritual Development has also been immensely encouraging.

### **1.10 Summary of Learning**

The key points emerging for me are:

- The brief was ambitious and lacked definition – what emphasis was required? What is a good leader? Or the interpretations around 'Christian' organization? What should a 'masterclass' format look like in this context? What was the history around this and the current issues?
- The intervention needed a more hands-on approach from the business school client manager and internal sponsor, including incorporating a ACC Director to work as part of the design and delivery team

- Theory was a bit of red –herring, and hence a ‘masterclass’ was not the best format for the topic. Interpreting the brief into a more practical workshop would have helped the design of it to be more appropriate for the type of people attending it
- The audience was too big, not voluntary and of mixed faith – the multiple layers of ambiguity exacerbated the tension around the subject area
- Large groups need plenty of time for small group work and plenary discussion – less content, more participation and more ‘real time’ sharing of issues in the room. Less is more!
- The Holistic Development Model did engender some useful inputs from the group and could have been used from the outset to create a more engaging, less exclusive, learning environment. I need to develop greater confidence around working with the model and build a bigger bank of exercises to elicit insights.
- I think I have more ‘substance’ than ‘form’. I could improve my presentation skills, but I think that I am best placed to work with small groups and with individuals.
- The subject matter was threatening to many – challenging at the level of inner journey, ego etc thus the nature of Christianity itself creates conflict as there is a core element of surrender involved! Spirituality is not an easy subject to work with!

The session was a mixed bag – it was not all bad, but it could have been better. Whilst one person said ‘it was a poor start’, some of the more encouraging feedback said:

- It generated some interesting discussion view and was useful to bring out some challenging issues for the movement.
- (I expected session to) help me think through my role as new CEO of ACC and a newcomer to the ACC movement. The masterclass gave me some helpful tools to examine these further but no easy answers.

The session also did give people:

- A chance to reflect on why they work for a Christian organization, and what individually they can offer to understanding of the Christian ethos.

As a Christian, attempting to support other Christians with the difficulties of bridging the gap between their spirituality and leadership practice, I feel proud that I had to courage to maintain a Christian perspective and stirred up some recognition of this being an issue that senior leaders need to take seriously and work through personally. As mentioned, there are no easy answers. And that really is a good point – each leader has to wrestle through how

their Christianity impacts their leadership for themselves. I think the take-away booklet they were given may be able to help with learning around this post-event.

The tension around whether the ACC is a 'Christian' organization, and if so how this is worked through in practice, remains an ongoing concern. I think that ultimately we did deliver something that was 'challenging' and which 'left people feeling uncomfortable' (which ACC -Y CEO had said he wanted the event to achieve) and so perhaps that's a fairly positive outcome after all. The event did 'ruffle a few feathers' and that ultimately, for me, is a positive thing – I hope that it has engendered the desire to take the subject further forward in other ways.

I am very grateful that post-workshop, I have been in conversation with the new Executive of Christian Spiritual Development and sharing thoughts about some of the complexity inherent in this area. For those who understand the deep significance of spiritual well-being in the lives of young people, it is a matter of integrity to signpost the way for others. An internal research report by Jacky Bone, which I was later given access to, had summed up the internal challenge: 'The ACC must not shy away from giving the young people and others it serves the opportunity not only to explore spirituality and Christian faith, but also, if they choose, have the opportunity to commit themselves to following Christ in a committed way.'

I am grateful to the business school and to the ACC for providing this rich learning for all of us around the more tricky leadership issues.

## **Appendix 2: Overview of the ACC Masterclass (used for internal marketing)**

### **Leadership – What makes a good Christian leader?**

In the ACC's Leadership Development Strategy consultation document, two particular current needs expressed by leaders, both lay and paid included:

*Provide a place to consider the impact that the individual's personal faith can have on their leadership within the ACC Movement.*

*Have a strong focus on the ethos and what it means to be a faith based organization: help leaders to reflect on the ACC Mission and impact from a theological and faith perspective.*

This masterclass will address both of these needs and will explore:

- **How do you mix Christian leadership with business leadership?**
- **What is distinctive about being an ACC leader, linked to faith and Christian Mission?**

The Masterclass will be led by **DB**, Director and CEO of Consultancy and Talent Development from the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at a Leading Business School; and facilitated by **Sue Howard** and **JK**, both founding members of **EPICC**, a Christian organizational consultancy which specialises in Leadership Formation.

We will draw on a variety of leadership and Christian texts to provide a theoretical overview of the relationship between Christian Faith and Leadership which are deeply inter-twined. The workshop will then focus on how these concepts can be practically lived out within the lives of leaders in the ACC. John will share personal examples of leadership/faith challenges he has experienced during his 25 years as a management consultant with PA – latterly as a Senior Partner.

The Holistic Development Model will be introduced as a tool to reflect on personal spiritual foundations to leadership, and will be used to explore current leadership challenges within the ACC. Participants will be invited to work in small groups and engage in personal reflection to deepen understanding of their own leadership 'moments' and choices.

A plenary session will help to draw together insights into what it means to be a faith based organization.

Pre-reading: *The inner life of a Christian Leader*, L2, Sue Howard and Chris Blakeley, (2010), Grove Books

Recommended Resources:

*Leadership – A Critical Text*, Simon Western (2008), Sage;

*The God of Intimacy and Action*, Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling (2007), Jossey Bass

Outcomes from this session:

- An expanded awareness of the spiritual dimension within leadership and how this can enhance organizational performance
- Encouragement for individuals to deepen their personal walk with God and to see more clearly the core importance of this to their leadership role within ACC
- Introduction to the ‘holistic development model’ as a reflective tool which supports spiritual formation as being core to effective personal leadership
- Individual and shared reflection on the distinctive ways that ACC leaders link their personal faith to the achievement of ACC’s mission

## **DB**

Director and CEO of Consultancy and Talent Development is also a Senior Visiting Fellow within *Leading Business School*. She leads our Consultancy and Talent Development work and is accountable to the Director. She is responsible for services to increase the effectiveness and achievement of voluntary and community organizations. She is a founder liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants. Previously Director of Business Programs in WorldCom and now also an independent consultant, she enjoys managing and developing people and has a demonstrable track record for driving change within organizations.

## **Sue Howard MA**

Alongside her work with **EPICC**, a Christian organizational consultancy which specialises in Leadership Formation, Sue also works independently via **Holistic Leadership** to provide spiritual mentoring to business leaders. Sue has worked in both academic and commercial environments including: *NGO World Vision UK*, where she ran a pilot CMI management diploma for UK managers, and supported a leadership development programme in West

Africa. Prior to this Sue worked at *Cranfield School of Management*, and with the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*.

Sue's publications include: *The Spirit at Work Phenomenon* (Azure, 2004); a contribution to the book '*Beyond – Business and Society in Transformation*' (Raich & Dolan, Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); *The Inner life of a Christian Leader*, (Grove Books, 2010) and more recently has written for the *International Journal for Leadership in Public Services* (Emerald, 2011). Her research and publications have influenced the recognition of 'spirituality' as being core to authentic leadership development in a variety of post-graduate management contexts such as Ashridge business school and Roffey Park Institute. She is currently a part-time PhD student at Winchester University where she continues her research into how Christian Spirituality is applied by leaders. Sue attends St. Albans Vineyard church.

#### **JK**

As well as being a part of **EPICC**, JK is also Director of Change Management in [Transforming Business](#) at the University of Cambridge. He studied Natural Sciences and Management Studies at Cambridge University before working in the early implementations of IT in ICI and Shell, then joining xx Consulting Group where he developed innovative approaches to implementing IT for managers and professionals. With experience now spanning more than 30 years, he is an expert on high performance organizations, delivering sustainable change, coaching business leaders and optimising intellectual and human capital. His recent work has concentrated on the leadership of participative change and management situations. He returned to the Lord in 2004 and worships at Banstead Baptist Church - and loves the spirituality of choral evensong. JK is also Treasurer of CABA – the Christian Association of Business Executives <http://www.cabe-online.org/trustees.php>

### **Appendix 3: ACC Leadership Qualities – Comparison with the HDM**

#### ***Personal Qualities***

##### **Self-awareness:**

(Developing and becoming self)

- Awareness of how faith and spirituality are a differentiator, and the impact personal faith has on leadership
- Authenticity, confidence, humility and grace
- Self management – measured risk

(Embracing imperfections)

- Physical and emotional resilience
- Making tough decisions

(Spirituality)

- Integrity, Trust, Ethos (Character)
- Courage

(Expressing Potential)

- Passion, Curiosity, Creativity, Innovation
- A strong and persuasive voice
- Entrepreneurial

(Without losing sight of Ideal)

- Determination,
- Energy and buzz,
- Drive for improvement
- Perseverance

##### **Working with and through others**

(Unity with Others)

- A listener
- Inspire, motivate, liberate
- Enable (not confine), give courage, encourage and support

(Serving Others)

- Respect, embrace diversity, celebrate difference
- Collaborate, building teams and networks
- Work in partnership, and through negotiation
- Influence effectively and strategically (including political influencing)
- Build consensus, achieving common purpose across the Movement
- Give and receive feedback
- Hold to account, support and challenge

(Ideal)

- Drive for results: pursuing opportunity
- Think beyond the boundaries

(Imperfections)

- Provide containment for the organization through turbulence

**Group activity? Assessing context – How did Jesus do this?**

- Reading and seizing the future, embracing change
- Understanding the bigger picture, but able to engage with detail
- Setting vision, purpose and focus – all with young people at the heart, and with a belief in the innate goodness of young people
- Ready to learn, open minded
- Resourceful
- Politically astute

**Appendix 4: Personal Leadership Qualities viewed through the lens of the HDM**

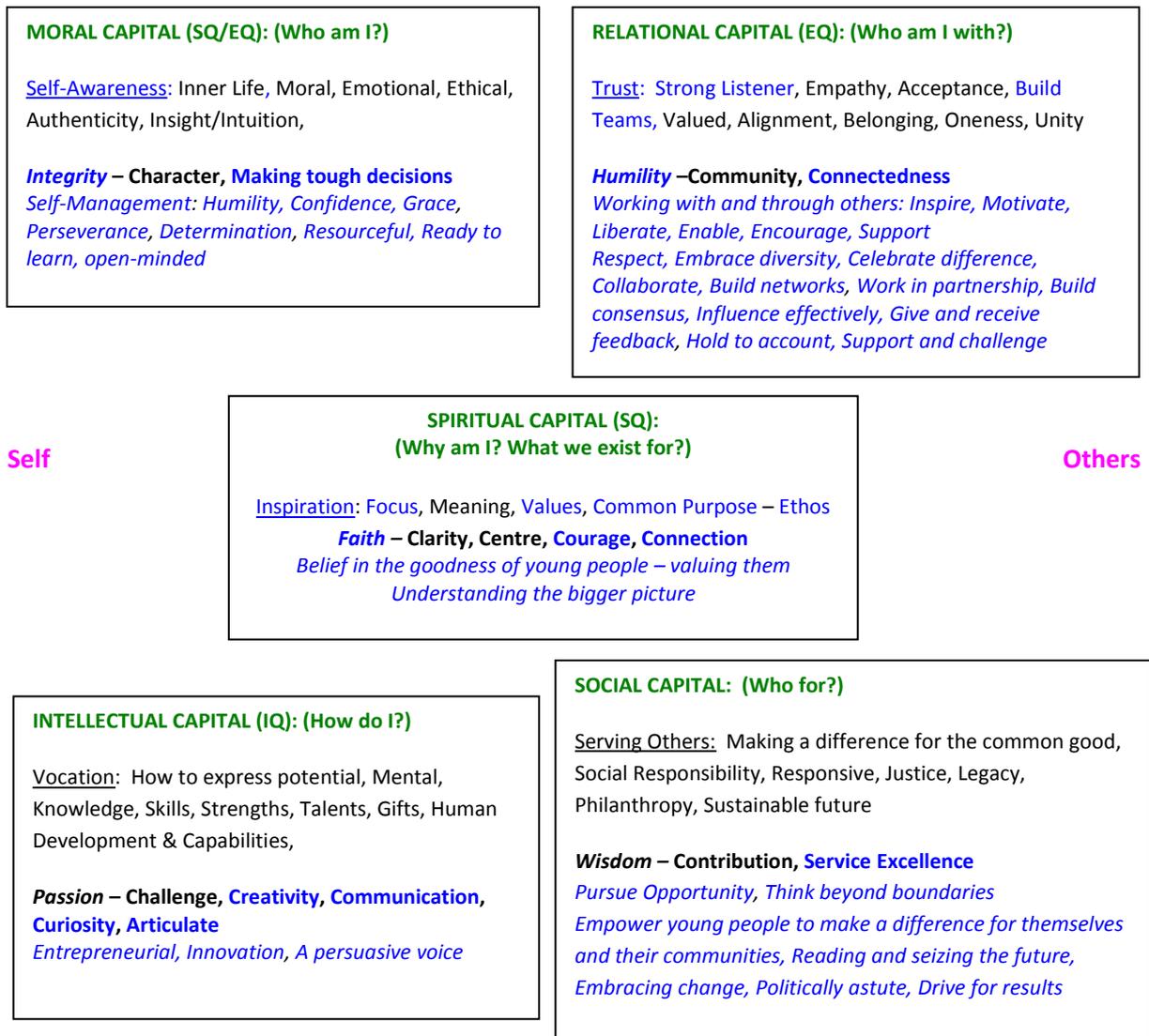
**Being (Internal)**

**REALITY/EMBRACING IMPERFECTION: (Where am I? How am I?)**

Vulnerability: Messy Change, Weakness – *Suffering, Exploitation*

**Confusion/Complexity**

**Provide containment for the organization through turbulence, physical and emotional resilience**



**IDEAL: (What can I?)**

Vision: Participative Change, Wholeness – *Hope, Harmony*

**Drive for improvement, energy and buzz**

**Completion/Choice**

**Doing (External)**

## Appendix 5: ACC flip chart responses

### Inspiration, Ethos

- Is ACC really inspired by Christ and his values/teachings?
- I believe that something bigger than me can change me through spiritual practices – like dripping water shaping a pebble
- Making time to chat/pray/worship/rant with my friend in non-managerial supervision
- What Would Jesus Do? Go and do it! Take a risk
- The example of Jesus and other people
- Using faith to change me and then changing others
- Living like Jesus because of what he's done
- A calling and sharing

### Developing Inner Self

- Spend time with God to understand my role and purpose
- Discernment through the gospel
- Retreat, refreshing, refocus
- Clarity of vision – articulate narrative
- Objectively inspired self-reflection i.e. leading, listening to material that interests me then makes me think
- Make time for God first
- Reflection, still, quiet, just being and waiting
- Feeding my spirit in a variety of ways
- I can't see my full potential without reliance on God
- My effectiveness derives from God working through me
- Need more time with God
- Staying strong in a 10 force gale!
- The ACC can consume you if you let it – it's all about balance
- Times of prayer and worship where the Holy Spirit fills me and energises me

### Unity with Others

- Important to make time to be with the team. This leads to greater service to others
- Can't do it on my own
- Importance of corporate worship to understand 'community' place/interaction with God and society

- Being open
- Working together with others in a way that builds
- Submitting where needed – DESPITE my ego
- Pastoral care
- Being challenged beyond what I believe is possible. Unity!
- Working together to agree values. Supporting others through change. Communicating unity.

### Expressing Full Potential

- Do not be impatient. Everything at the right time
- Be true to yourself
- I have something to offer even – perhaps especially – when I think I don't
- Taking risks and living what I believe
- Developing my inner strength and sharing that strength with others through God
- God does not give up on me so I must not give up on others
- Trying to commit to regular 'loving' acts and attitude in a way that retains integrity and avoids 'piousness'
- Reaching my limits

### Service to Others

- Outworking my faith and responsibility before God to others
- Greenleaf –servant leadership. Serve first, then lead, equip others to grow, then become servants themselves and lead
- Faith in action
- Seeing release and performance of others potential – current staff, stakeholders etc
- Real tangible change through choice
- Working my faith out in practice and in a way that helps and builds
- Give my TIME...the most important commodity a leader possesses
- It's what we do and it really hard to sustain
- This is only sustainable when underpinned by devotion
- Putting others first
- Take time with people and give of yourself
- Making an effort when you don't want to
- Help others to question the meaning of life – especially when it's been rubbish so far!

### **Reality of Self and Circumstances**

- We're in a spiritual war – don't expect an easy ride!
- Reflection, coach, share, peer support, explore, scenarios, focus, vision, clarity
- This is a never ending journey in which I constantly learn, develop and move on
- Much of the time the world is a confusing place, but God works through any limitations
- Understanding/looking for the path I am on, how it interacts with others and being patient waiting for the revelation of the next stepping stone

## **Appendix 6: Feedback Analysis – What makes a good leader in a Christian organization?**

### **Section 1: What did you hope to gain from this seminar and did you achieve this?**

1. The title on our programme was leadership in a Christian organization and I was looking forward to some insights into what this might mean and how I could exercise my role more efficiently. I don't know that this was addressed in the masterclass and I certainly don't feel that I am taking any insights away with me
2. I think the master class was actually how to be a Christian within an organization so don't think the objective or my expectation was achieved
3. Didn't know it was happening
4. To further explore the topics of Christian leadership
6. National leadership discussion which opens up discussion on the importance of Christian identity within the development of leadership of a Christian organization
7. Some new ideas, different challenges
8. I had no prior expectations from this class
9. Being a Christian leader in a Christian organization – shared understanding, shared vision, toolkit
10. Not wholly sure as late entrant but wanted to hear from others how they felt about leadership as Christians
11. Exploration of leadership in a Christian org. in the context of ACC's inclusive practice – people of all faiths and none, are welcome and active in the movement. Despite the promising session title the focus was entirely on Christians as leaders. I did not understand a lot of it.
12. I attended as an observer. I'm getting close to completing a Doctorate researching the historical Christian basis of the ACC in relation to inclusivity. I found it interesting
13. The session lacked the spark to really inspire and encourage although some of the concepts were very sound and helpful
14. Not sure what I gained but it generated some interesting discussion views was useful to bring out some challenging issues for the movement
15. Chance for people to reflect on why they work for a Christian organization and what individually they can offer to understanding of the Christian ethos
16. To gain some insight into the topic. Help to bring a clearer view of Christianity within the organization / movement
17. Personal challenge, new thinking, ideas to take away, clearer on my position with respect to my sense of mission

- 18. Inspiration – achieve it? No.
- 19. To help me think through my role as a new CEO, and a newcomer to the ACC movement. The masterclass gave me some helpful tools to examine these further but no easy answers!
- 20. The session seemed more confusing than helpful – all ACC’s are different but the assumption was that we were all at the same place. Did not answer the question in my opinion
- 21. I hoped to gain an insight into how we deal with both being leaders in a Christian organization and being a Christian leader. Not sure the workshop gave me this
- 22. More than what I did
- 23. I hoped it would engage us with how all leaders, people of faith and not, lead and lead well in a Christian organization. I feel the session missed this totally. It ‘camped’ on an island called ‘Christian’ and I didn’t have the courage to go anywhere else
- 24. Understanding/debate/discussion about what it is to lead a Christian organization – not achieved
- 25. Some exciting new thinking for me – lots of discussion and the bringing through a range of views from different perspectives. (I didn’t really achieve this – all seemed quite academic, more ‘Christian’ than we possibly really are. Very little passion coming through
- 26. Further insight – yes
- 27. I didn’t know what to expect but I vaguely hoped it would illuminate the very present challenge of driving forward a Christian organization in the modern eclectic world. No I didn’t achieve this.
- 28. No preconceptions – arrived with an open mind
- 29. Examples of guidance of how good leadership can be applied to a Christian organization – not really focused on Christian leadership instead

**Section 2: Value of the seminar**

Felt it covered ground I knew	Some new thinking and a few ideas	Changed my way of thinking about leadership
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	

- 1. Covered ground I knew then confused it so I left feeling more uncertain
- 2. Covered ground I knew Regarding leadership
- 11. None

### Section 3: Other ratings

Key: 1: poor, 6: excellent

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Ave
Sue Howard	7	8	9	2	3		29	2.5
DB	1	4	10	9	1		25	3.2
JK	1	5	14	7	2		29	3.1
Structure of the event and ability to participate	6	7	9	4			26	2.4

25. Sue was clearly very knowledgeable from an academic point of view but I did feel that there were other people here (CEOs) who could have led a more dynamic session and understood us better. John was very engaging. Unsure about his content, but good. The structure was difficult for a less Christian person

### Section 4: What could be done to improve this event:

2. Ensure it meets the objective and the title
4. Shorter more engaging input session. Proper break halfway through. Need to adapt the material as the session progressed
6. Too much initial theory and reading the detailed PowerPoint slides detracted from the opportunity for more audience participation and engagement
7. Shorter teaching blocks, giving complex ideas then allowing space to wrestle. Less reading of PowerPoint slides rather use them as a launch pad for ideas
9. Too much theory – more time needed to put theory into practice – more practical sessions
10. Make it clearer that those of no faith are welcome
11. I was completely excluded as I am not a Christian. None of the excellent points raised were taken on board and the facilitators blindly continued with the planned programme, disregarding what were 2 great opportunities to make it more relevant and accessible to the ACC
13. This was difficult and challenging subject but I do feel that the session lacked spark
14. I wonder of the brief and context of the ACC movement was clear for you as organizers and facilitators
15. It is a problem starting from an assumption of Christianity and jargon and values. The deliverer's style switched off a lot of people early on. What bonds the movement is people wanting to help young people improve their lives. The main motivation is not the C thing.

16. The model was confusing, needs me to think more!
18. I didn't buy into the model as I was not engaged in the presentation. I felt uninspired and bored. The pace was too slow. I sat around for 3 hours wondering what the point of the afternoon was.
19. The audience was too large, discussion was dominated by a few 'loud mouths' (some old ACC voices). No attempt was made to encourage those who did not say anything to contribute
20. Teaching style was a bit boring and although challenging us to think of Christian faith in the ACC it was not clear
21. Clear identification of the purpose of the master class – identifying key learning
22. No energy, not interactive, wrong assumptions, very poorly delivered – but good ideas and challenge thinking
23. I fear it had the effect of making those who do not fit a particular mould of 'Christian' feeling ..... not very good
24. The presenters need to adapt when challenged
25. Broaden into 2 clear blocks would have been better. A lot of very academic content
26. Probably needs more time and space and ventilation
27. Please listen to the brief more carefully and engage presenters who have more empathy with the audience
28. Talking in groups was the most helpful. Early dialogue on Western, too long and too dry – more EXAMPLES please

**Section 5: Are you aware of the leadership programme priorities:**

**Y 24 N 3**

<b>Did this masterclass:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Ave</b>
<b>Contribute to leadership programme priorities</b>	7	9	6	2	1		25	2.2
<b>Help to achieve personal development goals</b>	6	10	3	2			21	2.0

**Section 6: Job Title**

1. CE
2. Dir Bus Development
4. CE
5. CE

6. CEO
7. CEO
8. Deputy CE
9. CEO
10. Director of organizational effectiveness
11. Strategic leader
- 12 CEO
- 13 CE
17. National Contact Manager
18. Youth programmes manager
19. CEO
20. Programme manager
21. CE
22. CE
23. CEO
- 24, CEO
25. CE
26. CEO
27. CEO
29. CEO

**Section 7: What will you do differently as a result of this masterclass?**

4. I will reflect on the material provided further in order to consider this
5. Not much
6. Reflect on the outcomes of the model
8. Look at emerging leaders across the staff to invest rather than investing in the 'obvious'
9. Spiritual development
10. Not sure
11. Be very careful to ensure that I understand intended content before attending another
12. Reference it in my thesis
13. I do need to spend more time developing my walk/intimacy with God in order to be more effective
17. I'll be more devoted!
18. Unfortunately nothing

- 19. Use the holistic development model
- 20. Need to consider Christian emphasis in the ACC and how I can be part of that
- 21. Maybe speak to senior staff about their thoughts on this
- 22. Explore with senior team
- 23. Keep pushing the notion that the answer lies in Christians and non-Christians finding a new place, new language, new understanding
- 24. Attempt to steer the direction of the leadership away from a single perspective
- 25. There are moments that have helped me to think about myself and my work, but that has been alongside rather than part of the session
- 26. Reflect on the model
- 29. Might use tool in some way with staff

**Section 8: Any other comments about this masterclass or the pilot leadership development programme:**

- 2. At times the masterclass was extremely hard work to remain engaged, death by PowerPoint, lack of eye contact, ability to work with technology, no interesting debate on subject matter
- 4. I thought there was possibly an absence of understanding of previous articulation of the Christian basis of the movement (i.e. greater knowledge would have improved the theoretical material and grounded the discussion in our collective practice)
- 9. Could have done with more interaction
- 10. Thank you for your time – it may help with your evaluation to know that I am not a Christian
- 11. People listen to us and adapt the programme. The model does not celebrate diversity when introduced from a wholly Christian perspective, regardless of (?). The team needs to adapt the Masterclass ‘live’ in relation to the needs of the audience
- 13. More research was required before delivery
- 18. I’m excited about the pilot leadership development programme. However I felt this ‘masterclass’ was more ‘apprentice class’. I did not go away with anything solid. I don’t think I fully understood the model as I disengaged from the presentation. I am a committed Christian so it was not about the pitch. I just learn better in a more dynamic teaching environment. I just switched off. Bored. Sorry!
- 19. I have not understood why the original masterclass date was changed. More use of small group discussion plus feedback to main plenary would have improved this dramatically.

- 21 Really struggled to engage. Didn't feel able to contribute. Felt it was a little exclusive – no appreciation of the range of positions on a Christian journey
22. Learn how to connect with audience
23. A poor start
24. This is not a good start to the programme
25. Very long, very tiring. That length of session really needs a more dynamic approach. Sadly I'm left feeling less likely to take part in other opportunities within the pilot programme than I was 3 hours ago.
29. Is the best way to be/lead a Christian organization really to be a better /more thoughtful Christian?

## Appendix 7: PowerPoint slides used during the ACC presentation

### Slide 1

What makes a good leader in a  
Christian organisation?

ACC – 9 November, 2011

Sue Howard – *EPICC*  
John Kay - *EPICC*  
DB – *Business School*

### Slide 2

Opening Reflection

**How have you experienced  
Christian Leadership?**

### Slide 3

What is Leadership?  
Some thoughts from Western,  
'Leadership – A Critical Text' 2008

- Leadership is inherently complex and not easily definable
- Leadership is frequently 'dumbed down' to meet the demand for easy answers and quick fix solutions
- The main body of leadership literature focuses on solo-actors and individual leadership traits and competencies
- However, leadership does have *shared meanings*
- Leadership is part of an ongoing learning process that occurs in group contexts, involving influence and goal attainment
- *What is important is to ask the challenging, critical, difficult but important questions*

Slide 4

**Leadership is the property and consequence of a community**

- Critical leadership looks at *whole systems* and *human implications* – challenging the values/ethical basis of leadership.
- Burgoyne & Pedler suggest that leadership should be more:
  - *Focused on challenges*, rather than upon the person
  - *Collective* and less individualised
  - Various, and *less one-size-fits all*
- Leadership opportunities (or ‘moments’) are all around us in the processes, behaviours and social systems in which we work on a daily basis
- Yet there is still little clarity in the literature or in practice as to how the individual fits into the social process of leadership
- *The leadership task is bound up with sense-making; aligned with what is meaningful in a particular context, and time*

‘Expectations’ around leadership can create difficulties.  
‘being expected to lead’ can be a barrier and a burden.  
‘being expected to follow’ when you have useful ideas is deeply frustrating and destructive.  
The potential for leadership is often frustrated in many organizations.

**The question is, do you want leadership to be commonplace? Do you want an organization where people are able to offer leadership when they feel it is theirs to offer?**

**Do you have people in ACC who can sense tomorrow’s challenge but whose voice is not being heard?**

Slide 5

**The Work Foundation research:  
Principles of ‘Outstanding’ Leadership**

People who are perceived by others to lead well:

- *Think and act systemically* – **see things as a whole** rather than compartmentalising. Connecting the parts with a guiding sense of purpose.
- *See people as the route to performance* – deeply people and **relationship centred**, understanding the importance of capability and engagement of people
- *Are self confident without being arrogant* – conduits to performance through influence on others – their key tool is themselves, embodying both **humility** and confidence

The perceptions around people who lead well boil down to a few salient points.

Slide 6

**The Holistic Nature of Christianity**

*Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

Three aspects:

1. **Intimacy** - A deep personal connection with God (Being)
2. **Interpersonal relationships** – Build others up
3. **Social Action** – Transformation in society (Doing)

- How do we enact this in our own context?

The leadership principles humility, relationships, whole systems are clearly linked to Christianity.

(Liminality – the threshold/the boundary – incorporates evangelism)

Slide 7

**The Fig Tree or The Mobius Strip?**




- **Lack of Substance** - The fig tree showed promise of fruit, but it produced none
- (Mark 11:13)
- **Integrity** - What you are on the inside – is what people experience on the outside

‘Let your lives speak’ – The testimony of integrity calls us to wholeness; it is the whole of life open to truth. When lives are centred in the Spirit, belief and actions are congruent, and words are dependable. As we achieve wholeness in ourselves, we are better able to heal the conflict and fragmentation in our community and in the world.

Integrity is a demanding discipline. We are challenged by cultural values and pressures to conform. Integrity requires that we be fully responsible for our actions. Living with integrity requires living a life of reflection, living in consistency with our beliefs and testimonies, and doing so regardless of personal consequences. Not least, it calls for a single standard of truth. (Cooper, 1991, in Graham, Walton & Ward (2005), Theological Reflections)

Slide 8

**Spiritual formation is the foundation for good leadership**

- Western concludes that **Leadership Formation, stemming from the idea of spiritual formation, is the most useful way to support people to become good leaders**
- Leadership Formation relates to a **holistic process**, working at a **collective idea of leadership** which includes and transcends the development of individual leaders. This takes place within the life of their particular workplace community
- Both the leader within oneself and the leadership within the organisation need nurturing and sustaining
- Successful organisations must create a context and process for the **holistic formation** of ‘all’ potential rather than ‘high’ potential leaders

Leadership has a strong relationship to the unexpected – We need to nurture **all** precisely because we do not know who will need to lead.

We are all human – and as such, in search of meaning. Let’s listen for that in other people.

Leadership is for **the common good**.

Slide 9

**Bishop Stephen Cottrell**

- **Definition of Spirituality:**
- **“How encounter with God is experienced, nurtured and expressed”**
- **Definition of Leadership:**
- **“How a community or organisation is enabled to realise its vision and aims”**
- **What do leaders do?**
- **“The whole organisation exercises leadership. Leaders create an environment of hope”**

Bishop Stephen says virtually the same thing.

Slide 10

**Spiritual Development**

- Taking one's spirituality seriously is potentially radical and subversive and impacts our leadership significantly (e.g. Martin Luther King; William Wilberforce)
- *It holds the possibility of growth into great spiritual freedom to faithfully follow the call of Christ in one's life*

**Hebrews 12:2 – Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

"Daily *moments* marked by the mystical (spirit filled) revelations of God's love – tap into the love and reality which go beyond rules and reason" (Campolo & Darling, 2007)

**It is important to discern any blocking of the Spirit in our lives and not to hinder the work of the Spirit in other's lives.**

Five types of 'mystical experience'

- New Insights – moments where our capacity to listen to what God is trying to say are enhanced
- I-Thou Relationships – Connection and sense of oneness, an intense spiritual unity
- Heightened Awareness – The spiritually alive person enjoys the ordinary things in life in an extraordinary manner. All of us can experience Christ in more mystically transforming ways by starting with the ordinary – it's as simple as that. God is present in every event – yet always hidden, leaving you room to recognise Him or not recognise Him. Being willing to be open to, and ready to receive, the Holy Spirit, is what transforms us so that we can transform the world.
- Conversion Experiences – Letting Go/Letting Come
- Breakthrough Experiences – where God breaks into our life

Slide 11

**The ACC - a Christian organisation**

Is the ACC a supportive environment for faithfully following the call of Christ on one's life?

Let's gain some clarity into the ACC's current leadership challenges and 'Leadership Moments'

**Our spirituality, our intimacy with God, empowers us to do the work of God.**

**Just spend 5 minutes now in silent prayer considering how you are following the call of Christ on your life.**

Slide 12

What did I do or experience in my work in the past week or two that was 'meaningful' for me?

Being

Spirituality

Doing

Each person is on their own spiritual journey. What is made possible in a Christian environment is openness to the spiritual dimension, and the support and challenge which comes from fellow travelers.

The opportunity for leadership is in this room.

The Leadership mantle within ACC is both to nurture its people and to serve the world. Let's look at this time as a 'leadership moment' and engage with each other on the issues surfacing for you.

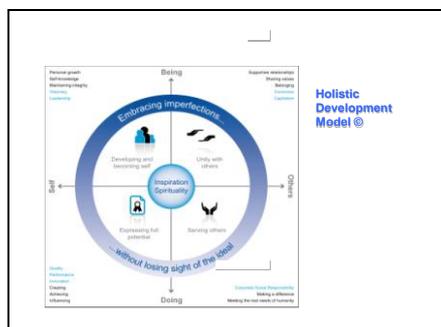
**The meaning of our discipleship** – our experience of God at work in our lives. The personal spiritual journey we are living. The challenges; the joys. Who are we becoming as a result of our work?

**Prayerful engagement** – nurturing intimacy; living consciously in the presence of God; our inner subjective transformation through our yielded-ness to God.

**Service oriented to ACC mission/vision** – How are we contributing to the world? How we share what God is doing in us with one another; the expression of our faith; our work within an inclusive Christian Movement, transforming communities so that all young people truly belong, contribute and thrive.

In pairs or threes discuss with one another what you feel has been meaningful for you recently about your work.

Slide 13



The Holistic Development Model provides a way to help us see from the whole.

The INSPIRATIONAL core centre of the model is an easier area for Christians to understand.

•What lies are our core - our spiritual identity and beliefs as Christians

From this we can see how important the oft neglected space of BEING is

•How Christian Faith is being lived out in us personally?

•To what extent are we experiencing a sense of belonging and support?

Then we look at How our faith informs our work – our DOING

- Both our vocation - then the outward expression of this in our lives – the awareness of our particular strengths, gifts, talents – our passion our capability. Innovation/Communication.
- And the area in which we are called to serve.

The outer circle of the model helps us to locate these qualities in the REALITY of our life. Reality/Ideal – Vulnerability/Hope; Earth/Kingdom

DRAW MODEL ON FLIP CHART AS I EXPLAIN NEXT FEW SLIDES: NB Map of Meaning: Developing Inner Self; Reality of Self and Circumstances

Slide 14

**‘Being’**

*How is our Christian Faith being lived out in us?*

- **Inspiration/Spirituality** – for Christians’ we can translate that space to be God/Christ in Me/Being filled with the Holy Spirit. Is spiritual formation a priority in our lives? What spiritual practices do we have in place to sustain us and to draw us towards greater intimacy with God?
- **Developing inner self** – what issues am I wrestling with in my leadership journey? What challenges are being made to my integrity and how am I responding to them? How is God’s spirit working in and through me?
- **Unity with others** – what does this mean within the ACC? How are we sharing our values, being supportive in our relationships and enabling a sense of belonging? How is God’s spirit working through us?

Slide 15

**‘Doing’**

*How does faith influence ACC Mission and Impact?*

- **Expressing Full Potential** – Am I using all my gifts and talents or could I bring more? How is the organisation supporting development of ‘all’ leadership potential in people?
- **Serving Others** – What will be the legacy of our work together at this time? Am I/Are we making the difference we want to make? How are ACC ‘clients’ experiencing greater meaning as a result of what we do?

How does our ‘God Awareness’ play out within the ACC?

Slide 16

**The Holistic View**

- **Reality** – Embracing Imperfections (in ourselves, others, the world) without losing sight of the ideal. What issues are we really grappling with in the day to day? How is our Christian understanding supporting us with these issues? What questions are emerging? How are we dealing with these issues/questions?
- **Ideal** – To what extent is our Vision aligned with the vision and mission of ACC? Are there other longings/aspirations that we would love to see fulfilled?
- **Holistic View** – Taking everything into account what are the leadership formation areas we are focusing on, and what do we need to give attention to at this time? Individually, and collectively?

Slide 17

**What do you believe about each of the areas in the model?**

- In each of the areas of the model, write down a phrase that describes what's true for you; what is the meaning of this pathway for you?
- Then go around the model and ask 'what is the belief that underpins this for me?'

**Handout: Blank Model for notes.**

Take your copy of the model and write down your responses to these questions and any insights that are emerging for you from our earlier work.

Then on **FLIP CHARTS AROUND THE ROOM:** Write a summary of what you believe about the importance of each of the elements of the model?

'What is the key phrase that sums up why this is important for you?'

Go quietly around the room and read what everyone else has written.

Slide 18

**Plenary – Sharing Insights**

**Let's reflect on this in as a group.**

- What do you notice that you have in common? What is different?
- Where are the tensions for you? E.g. between your own needs, and those of others  
Between being and doing? Between reality and ideal?
- What issues does this raise for the ACC?
- Are there pathways with which you struggled or felt uncomfortable?
- Do you see any imbalances?
- What else do you notice?

**Using the model on the floor:**

**Let's listen to some of the core insights arising from you as leaders.**

**Please stand in the part of the model which you feel most resonates with you at the moment. Think about your leadership role as it relates to this place.**

- **Think of a leadership challenge, step into different parts of the model and think about the challenge from that place**
- **If you were to move 1% of your time and energy into a part of the model, which one would it be? Step into that space. What does it give you to be there?**

Additional questions: In meaning, we are all leaders!

What things enable us to find meaning and what things distract us?

How do you find meaning yourself?

How do you find meaning as a 'team'?

How do we deal with ourselves in the 'organization'?

How do you help young people find meaning?

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### How might the ACC take this forward?

*"The sense of the ACC as a whole building a leadership position in society is an important place to dwell. It implies being in touch with where society needs to go."*

- What makes a good leader in a Christian Organisation?
- How does the ACC support spiritual formation?
- What does ACC need to give attention to at this time?

*How will the ACC take this forward?*

Support for spiritual formation?

Action Learning Sets?

Spiritual Mentoring?

Can the ACC use the Map of Meaning with young people to support their development?

*What makes a good leader within a Christian Organization?*

**Handout: Leadership Qualities as viewed through the lens of the HDM**

I have put together some thoughts about the ways in which your own 'leadership qualities framework' fits into the HDM – you may or may not find it helpful to refer to this as you work together on this exercise.

*Does the ACC really want to commit to the spiritual formation of its leaders?*

**Booklet: The Inner Life of Christian Leader**  
Some food for thought that can support the Developing Inner Self aspect of the model.

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**"Leadership is a journey, not a destination.  
It is a marathon not a sprint.  
It is a process, not an outcome" .  
(John Donahoe – CEO of eBay)**

**"LEADING FROM YOUR SOUL is more about inner  
courage and peace than it is about strategic  
planning. It is not about skill development, it is  
about facing fear, letting go of control, gaining self-  
worth and inner strength, finding inner freedom  
and moral passion-the things you learn only after  
you think you know it all. This journey takes you to  
your core-and the only requirement is courage."  
(Janet Hagberg, Writer and Teacher)**

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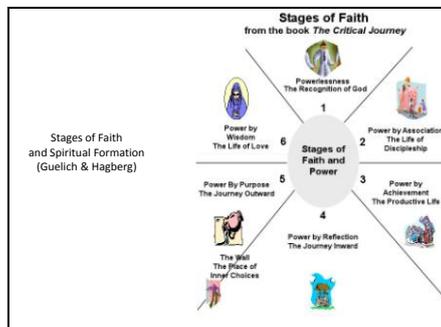
**References**

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- Campolo & Darling (2007) *The God of Intimacy and Action*, Jossey Bass
- Graham, Walton & Ward (2005) *Theological Reflection: Methods*, SCM Press
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- Senge et al (2005) *Presence*, Nicholas Brealey
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- Western (2008) *Leadership – A critical text*, Sage

Interesting web links:

- Janet Hagberg: [http://www.janethagberg.com/practicing\\_soul\\_leadership.htm](http://www.janethagberg.com/practicing_soul_leadership.htm)
- Faith & Leadership Series, Leadership Education Duke Divinity <http://www.faithandleadership.com/>

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**Stage 1** – ‘the discovery and recognition of God’ (33)

**Stage 2** – ‘a time of learning and belonging’ labeled ‘the life of discipleship’ (53)

**Stage 3** – ‘the productive life’

**Stage 4** – ‘the journey inward’ – ‘a deep and very personal inward journey’ that ‘almost always comes as an unsettling experience yet results in healing for those who continue through it’ (93). Wholeness looks a lot like weakness at this stage.

#### **THE WALL**

**Stage 5** – ‘the journey outward’ where our ‘focus is outward, but from a new, grounded center of ourselves’ (133). At this stage, ‘we surrender to God’s will to fully direct our lives, but with our eyes wide open, aware but unafraid of the consequences’ (133). We possess a new-found confidence that God loves us fully, just as we are.

**Stage 6** – ‘the life of love’ where God’s love is demonstrated through us ‘to others in the world more clearly and consistently than we ever thought possible’ (152). By losing ourselves, we find ourselves.

**Additional information about this faith development model can be found at:**

[http://www.theocentric.com/spirituality/christian\\_living/stages\\_of\\_faith\\_a\\_map\\_for\\_the.html](http://www.theocentric.com/spirituality/christian_living/stages_of_faith_a_map_for_the.html)

[http://www.janethagberg.com/critical\\_journey/index.htm](http://www.janethagberg.com/critical_journey/index.htm)

<http://kathyesobar.com/2008/06/10/a-nifty-chart-for-the-journey/>

[http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/about/pdfs/JOURNEY\\_THROUGH\\_THE\\_WALL](http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/about/pdfs/JOURNEY_THROUGH_THE_WALL)

## **Appendix 8: Organizations that are supportive of Christians at work**

I provide a comprehensive list of resources/groups that support Spirit at Work in my co-authored book (Howard and Welbourn, 2004).

Christian organizations that have influenced me, and which have created a supportive wider climate for my PhD research, include:

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) – has an evangelistic aim

<https://www.licc.org.uk/>

MODEM - “a national ecumenical Christian network, which encourages authentic dialogue between exponents of leadership, organisation, spirituality and ministry to aid the development of better disciples, community, society and world”

<http://www.modemuk.org>

Relationships Foundation – a think tank to develop relational thinking and engage with policy makers

<http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org/>

Faith in Business, Ridley Hall, Cambridge – Their journal *Faith in Business Quarterly* examines biblical and Christian views on a range of economic and business issues and has an ethical focus

<http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/centres/faith-in-business>

Theology at Work project – a biblical perspective on work

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/>

Transforming Business – entrepreneurial in focus

<http://www.transformingbusiness.net/>

Transform Work network - encourage the development of prayer groups within workplaces, and combine a number of Miller’s (2007) types

<http://www.transformworkuk.org/>