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**Toward developing a model of responsive pastoral care  
for adult children of divorce.**

by

Betty Joanne Scott

B.A. Roberts Wesleyan College, 1972  
M. T. S. Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 1992

THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
Master of Theology in Pastoral Counselling.

1996

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## ABSTRACT

Reports on consequences of parental divorce identify a crucial need for involvement with caring adults in recovery and healing. The literature review includes reports of research and anecdotal surveys of "adult children of divorce." The literature review stimulates questions for qualitative research with a pastoral care focus.

The thesis incorporates discussion about the church's role in helping individuals recover from divorce pain. It addresses contemporary concerns in group function, particularly in issues of pastoral care. An underlying assumption is a personal understanding that providing a healing community and participating in healing process is at the core of Christian mission. The thesis addresses basic theological and pastoral care assumptions.

The central organizing questions informing and shaping literary review and qualitative research for this thesis are: How has the church/community of faith provided a healing community and participated in the healing process for adult children of divorce? and, How do adult children of divorce want the church/community of faith to respond to their need for healing? The research component surveys respondents about their experience of parental divorce and needs for pastoral care.

Participants in this project identified inner resources as primary coping resources. Abandonment, isolation and loss of trust recurred as themes in their responses. Each respondent articulated an ideal for pastoral care within the context of their experience. Drawing from their input, this project envisions and describes a responsive model for pastoral care within communities of faith. The responsive model for care is portrayed in images of "piece work quilts." A trampoline as symbol of a relational network of support conveys the communal aspect of relational healing. A "*Slinky*" depicts the dynamic cycle of change through CARE.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Origin**

This pilot project originated in a review of popular and professional literature pertaining to research with children of divorce. My experience of parental divorce and an emerging awareness of divorce consequences kindled personal and professional curiosity. Exploring professional literature, I recalled my experience of parental divorce. My father was an active pastor in a conservative denomination, one of many rooted in the revivalist movement of the 19th century. Each of us in our nuclear family defined our identity through our understanding of roles and our perception of role expectations in our community of faith. When my parents divorced, I experienced losses of nuclear family and the loss of many extended family structures rooted in the church. Reflecting on the role of my community of faith at the time of my experience of parental divorce encouraged me to wonder how others experienced their community of faith's role in family divorce.

In this pilot study, I included individuals from several faith community backgrounds. I chose not to limit the initial research to individuals from pastoral homes. None of the participants grew up within pastoral families. Two of my participants are sisters. They noted parallel role expectations because of their parents' leadership positions within their community of faith. They experienced role expectations within their faith community similar to pastoral role expectations.

### **Theoretical Frame of Reference**

The project accepts as a frame of reference conclusions from previous researchers. Wallerstein (1989), Hetherington (1981), Hodges (1991), and others note that divorce disturbs



or destroys two vital developmental structures or supports. The primary loss is the family structure. Second is societal support. Wallerstein (1989) identifies these consequences for children of divorce: fear of commitment or love, anxiety about lasting relationships, anxiety about rejection, rising anger between the genders, increasing loss of childhood as children of divorce assume parental responsibilities, and increased anxiety about acceptance from the separated parent (pp. 17-18). Concerning legacies, she says:

The children of divorce have an old-fashioned view of marriage.... they are a morally conservative group ... not rooted in theology but ... their own gut-wrenching unhappiness over the experience of divorce. (p. 25)

In this thesis, "legacy" and "consequences" are terms informed by the framework established by contextual therapists. They define legacy as transgenerational reality. It does not necessitate replication of past behaviors and patterns. Rather, legacy involves the process of looking at transgenerational patterns and "the present generation's ethical imperative to sort out what in life is beneficial for posterity's quality of survival" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986, pp. 417-418). Consequences refers to the interconnectedness of action and reaction in forming relational bonds and relational conditions within the systemic framework of the individual or family. Both linear and circular causality are implicit (pp. 8-12).

Finding few reported studies from a pastoral care perspective generated questions. My background of parental divorce and experience with care-seekers shaped and informed the questions generated. How do pastoral caresharers apply the assumption that God calls the church to provide healing community to the needs of divorcing families? In this research project, I want to explore how individuals experience the faith community while working through divorce issues.

Hetherington and other researchers are emphatic about their conclusion that healing transpires in relationships with other significant adults. That, in coalition with the belief that part of the church's mission is to provide a healing community, is a basic assumption for this thesis. The chapter on theological and pastoral implications develops this assumption in some detail. Recent studies by L. A. Howard (1990) and R. Lind (1992) work from a pastoral care approach. Abstracts of their work stimulated my own process in organizing this research model.

### **Organizing Questions**

The central organizing questions informing and shaping both the literary review and research for this thesis are: How has the church/community of faith provided a healing community and participated in the healing process for adult children of divorce? How do adult children of divorce want the church/community of faith to respond to their need for healing? The primary focus of the thesis is a survey of respondents about their own experience of parental divorce and needs for pastoral care. The research for this thesis may prove foundational for envisioning and describing a *responsive* model for pastoral care (see p. 57) within the community of faith which is the Christian church. The developing model may work toward healing and reconciliation within the community of faith, particularly for those who experience parental divorce -- past, present or future. Consultation with pastors and therapists before further research may facilitate refining the model.

As person, theorist and therapist, I am eclectic. Identifying and tracing original contributors to my eclectic approach became an indispensable component of the research and my integrative process. The movement toward developing an integrative model resembles my

preferred method of travel. My destination is the developing model. My pilgrimage involves visiting, and perhaps revisiting, wayside look-outs. At these points, I explore the panoramic vista. Then, I narrow the focus, highlighting specific elements.

Chapter One reviews literature from clinical research and pastoral care. Chapter Two looks at the research methodology and summarizes participant responses. Chapter Three develops a theological foundation for models for pastoral care with children of divorcing or divorced families. Chapter Four moves toward the development of a model for responsive pastoral care. Participant responses, the theoretic development of Chapter One, the theological framework outlined in Chapter Three, careful attention to defining terms, and my reflection on my experience of pastoral care in the context of family divorce underpin the model. The conclusion looks at implications for pastoral care and research beyond this pilot study.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF DIVORCE RESEARCH**

As noted in the Introduction, this project originated in an earlier literature review. The personal and professional curiosity stimulated in this earlier work intensifies as I work with clients, adults and children, confronting issues of parental divorce.

Wallerstein (1989) participated in a long-term study of the effects of divorce with a selected group of families from a circumscribed area of the U.S. They interviewed parents and children at intervals, up to 15 years post-divorce (pp. xiii-xxi). Beal (1991) extrapolates from Wallerstein's report and supports it with data from his clinical experience. Both present a view that the consequences of parental divorce are often harmful. According to these authors, support through the grief reaction and enabling or empowering renegotiation of grief work is essential.

Wallerstein's (1989) conclusions and Beal's (1991) consideration of supportive case material from his practice present a gloomy perspective for adult emotional health following parental divorce. Walker (1986) optimistically suggests there is no long-term emotional damage for adults following parental divorce. These polarized conclusions oblige us to further research the consequences of parental divorce for children.

Recognizing these polarities as markers on a continuum, permits utilizing conclusions from previous researchers to provide basic assumptions for this study. Tessman (1978), Wallerstein (1989), Hetherington, (1991), Hodges (1991), and others note that divorce alters, disturbs or destroys two vital developmental structures or supports. The primary loss is the family structure. Second is societal support. Wallerstein (1989) identifies these consequences

for children of divorce: fear of commitment or love, anxiety about lasting relationships, anxiety about rejection, rising anger between the genders, increasing loss of childhood as children of divorce assume parental responsibilities, and increased anxiety about acceptance from the separated parent (pp. 17-18). Concerning legacies, she says: "The children of divorce have an old-fashioned view of marriage.... they are a morally conservative group ... not rooted in theology but ... their own gut-wrenching unhappiness over the experience of divorce" (p. 25).

### **Literature Review**

#### **Crisis Oriented Process**

Tessman (1978) explores the impact of separation, divorce and death of a parent from a theoretical perspective within the context of her clinical experience. Tessman conducted no formal study. She makes observations from case work considering recurring themes. She acknowledges the crucial problems of adaptation to change and comments:

The child of parting parents must deal with the loss or drastic alteration of the relationship to at least one parent, as well as with a new level of exposure to parental distress or bitterness. This inevitably involves a rupture in the continuity of caring that he or she experiences. Whatever the quality of the relationships within the family prior to separation, the rupture leads to transformations in the images of the self and of the parting parents, associated with intense feelings about the meaning or the change.... Children who are partially or totally bereft of the relationship to a previously loved parent need a network of human support in order to work out, rather than to disguise and distort, the grief within them. (pp. 3-4)

Tessman focuses on individual adaptation to drastic change within a systemic framework. She reflects on various theories of attachment and adaptive behaviors, highlighting the need for human support systems. "Comforting arms, real or symbolic regain importance for the bereft child or adult" (p. 4). She recognizes the influence of rapid societal

change, in the context of reconfiguring societal concepts of "normal family structure," and the internal conflict stimulated by the adaptive process, both societally and individually. These transitions add to the distress of families. Mediation of this distress occurs through accessing human support networks. In Tessman's work with intact and divorcing families, she observes the vulnerability of the transitional pain. The inability of individuals and families to adequately access human support networks exacerbates vulnerability (pp. 30-31).

Tessman identifies differing sources of support for children and their divorcing parents. In her experience, parents find their support system resources in a variety of social networks that encourage inter- and intrapersonal development, i.e., they experience a sense of community rather than isolation. Congruent with respondents from my survey, Tessman indicates that primary emotional support for children finds its principal locus in the *home* or custodial parent with less communal focus. Additionally,

... equally significant ... was the support of continued interest, visitation, or access to the absent parent as long as this benefit was not overridden by unmanageably harmful hostilities between the parents. If the absent parent was seriously devalued by either the home parent, or by the social interaction network surrounding the child, this constituted a further loss to the child .... When both parents were able to maintain a caring interest and some contact with the child, the nucleus of the human support network had remained intact. (p. 34)

Tessman identifies several factors impacting the child's adaptation, and repertoire of coping skills, to the transitions of parental divorce and reconfigured family structure. These include: the age of the child at the time of separation; the quality and quantity of information about causes; the child's personality at the time; how the need for sustained caring is met, parental cope-ability; relationships with absent and custodial parent; and, the new parental figures brought into the child's system (pp. 491-525). Tessman's observations provide a

contextual basis for subsequent study, despite the limitations imposed by her lack of formal research procedure. Participants in the current study raise comment on these important adaptational factors in their responses.

Wallerstein (1980, 1989) and her associates, developed and reported on a long-term qualitative study of the effects of divorce with a comparatively homogeneous group of sixty middle-class California families. They interviewed parents and children at intervals, up to 15 years post-divorce (1980, p. 5). Wallerstein's (1980) five year report notes several limitations of the study. However, she emphasizes that the nature of the study was the development of hypotheses not the testing of hypotheses (pp. 5-12). Acknowledging their intent of hypothesis generation, I adopted several of their observations as basic assumptions for my own study. I also designed this pilot study to develop hypotheses. The assumptions, based on foundational observations, delineate adaptational problems for children from divorcing families that appear to persist long-term.

Wallerstein's study is qualitative. As such, it includes no control group for noting contrasting adaptive behavior within the general population. The homogeneity of the study creates problems for interpretation and extrapolation. Responses and adaptation may not fit the experience of individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds or different sociocultural structures and political climates. An acquaintance grew up in Europe during WWII. That individual experienced parental divorce as a non-event compared to the survival concerns of war conditions.

Wallerstein adopted a process of semi-structured interviews, utilizing therapeutic listening skills. Her process fostered an atmosphere for disclosure in its relational style. This

creates strength and limitation for her study. Its strength is the wide-ranging, vulnerable response. Its limitation: the temptation for researcher and participant to engage in a psychotherapeutic process instead of research.

The adaptational problems identified by Wallerstein are congruent with Tessman's (1978) findings in the context of her work with children whose bereavement resulted from death or separation and divorce (p. vii). Wallerstein (1989) acknowledges similarities between bereavement through death and marital dissolution. She avers that the element of choice involved in separation and divorce intensifies the pain and loss.

Children feel that they have no say, no way to influence this major event in their lives.... The devastation children feel at divorce is similar to the way they feel when a parent dies suddenly, for each experience disrupts close family relationships.... The impact of divorce is different. Finality is not present in the same way as in death, and children logically assume that the divorce can be undone at any time. (pp. 12-14)

Some consequences Wallerstein identifies which form basic assumptions for this study are: "trust in the reliability of relationships has been shaken.... Relationships between men and women are infused with anxiety, ... [and, there is] rising anger and greater freedom to express that anger between the sexes ..." (pp. 16-27). Others include: a sense of shared bond of understanding with others who have endured the same trauma, a sense that growing up is more difficult in their context of divorce; a more conservative sense of morality (p. 24); intense and unresolved emotions "particularly anger" (p. 25); overall, a sense of empathy for parents and others with whom they are in relationship. Particularly poignant is Wallerstein's summary:

As a group, the children of divorce do not feel a sense of entitlement. Knowing that their needs may have to take lower family priority, they accept conditions set down by a harried single parent and understand that they may



have to share, that resources are limited and that they must act fairly with others. (p. 26)

Beal (1991) extrapolates from Wallerstein's report and supports it with data from his clinical experience. He presents a view that the consequences of parental divorce are often harmful. Support through the grief reaction and enabling or empowering renegotiation of that grief work frequently is essential to the healing process for children of parental divorce. Beal acknowledges that adults who grew up in a divorced family often perceive themselves as different and impoverished by the divorce. Yet he urges his readers to recognize:

Each divorce is unique, and it is what has happened *before* the divorce, *how the divorce itself is played out* and, most important, what happens *after the divorce* that influences what ultimately becomes of the children. (p. 35, italics original)

He continues:

The most important factors - the ones that determine how a divorce will affect a specific child - are: *the unique characteristics of the child; the relationship that develops between the child and his parents - but mainly with the custodial parent, and, most important, the way the family reorganizes itself after the parents have separated.* (p. 36, italics original)

He argues strenuously that the context of the family's divorce and the nature of relationships pre- and post-divorce mediates the adaptive process for children in divorcing families (pp. 35-37). Like Tessman, Beal's observations are helpful, but limited because of his lack of formal study procedures.

Thomas Berner (1992) summarizes his qualitative study. He solicited his respondents from 316 daily newspapers. He received letters of interest from 459 persons in 39 states. Berner remarks: "Of those 459, 231 filled out the questionnaire. Some ... provided ...

addresses of their siblings - 123 in all. Of that number, 36 filled out a questionnaire" (p. 1). Again the population was largely white, middle class; few of Berner's respondents were male.

Berner codes his data by noting word frequencies in responses. He characterizes his respondents as "over-protective," having "a strong sense of family," with "a willingness to work a little harder on their marriages and to sacrifice to keep their mate happy." Although there is often a "less than total commitment to the marriage of adulthood (pp. 108-115). Berner comments on the frequent need to balance the mature behavior of the immediate coping with less maturity as an adult. He writes: "... I always mistook independence for maturity. Actually, maturity ... thrived in a secure environment, ... I feel about 10 years behind my contemporaries" (p. 116). Berner concludes:

The childhood experience of divorce hangs over the child of divorce forever, although some struggle to put it behind them.... the impact of divorce is everlasting. That does not mean children of divorce go through life flawed, but it does mean that a piece of them is still trying to resolve the trauma of their parents' divorce. (p. 118)

### Transitional Family Structure

Ahrons (1987), with others, argues that divorce is not aberrant but a "*normal* process of family change" (p. vii). She conducted a 10 year longitudinal study. The study focuses on the transitional process. Out of this study, she conceptualizes divorce as an institution (pp. 42-45). For her, this changes the focus to a positive valuing of divorce as an adaptive response. She focuses on removing the pathological labels for divorcing spouses. She depathologizes through describing and defining several styles of redefining the former spousal relationship. Ahrons coins the term "bi-nuclear families" to describe the process for families with children, particularly when the family is further reconfigured through remarriage (pp. 42-

43). She encourages researchers to move away from pathologizing the divorce process for families. Ahrons writes:

Most of the current research on the effects of divorce is premised on divorce as a disruptive, crisis-potentiating event. This premise has produced research which seeks to discover the consequences of the precipitating event of divorce on individuals.... and has focused on examining the negative consequences for both children and adults. (p. 209)

Wolchik (1985) and Karoly edited a text which incorporates several researchers' perspectives. There, Felner argues that adopting a contextual perspective for divorce and adaptation resolves the inconsistency of various research findings as noted in his literature review (pp. 48-59). Wolchik and her associates utilize a Divorce Events Schedule for Children and contextualize their research. They asked three groups of people, children of divorce, divorced mothers and mental health professionals to rate the events on this instrument for stressfulness (p. 119). Wolchik bases her work on the assumption that some causal nature exists in events of the divorce process. She believes outcomes improve when intervention in the process occurs (pp. 134-138). The strength of Wolchik's approach lies in accessing information from children, parents and professionals. The weakness is in the use of a rigid standardized format. Potentially, this rigidity focuses on the extreme pathology or normality of identified events/behaviors.

Robert Emery (1988) offers a sociological dimension to the transitional perspective. He explores issues of children's adjustment to family divorce through multiple lenses. His focal point is changing structures for families and family function. He examines historical perspectives on family and demographics of divorce in the U.S., setting them alongside current demographics. He advocates utilizing research from multiple perspectives to assist

clinicians in moving from an orthoroxical, polarized approach to more dynamic and respectful approaches (pp. 11-32). Emery surveys key research on divorce and adjustment, looking at problems in methodology and theoretical grounding. His work proved helpful in the context of designing the research questionnaire and project. In essence Emery provides a wake-up call for researchers and clinicians to exercise caution in applying one's theoretical grounding to the data.

Hodges (1991) incorporates new foci and information and expands his theoretical formulation (p. vii). Hodges uses the lenses of Piaget's cognitive theory and the analytic context of object relations theory for interpretive and interventive strategies in working with divorced families (pp. 3-7). His extensive literature review noted the impact of divorce context on adjustment outcome for children. He addressed the impact of separation and reconciliation in the divorce process. Emery summarizes his research and review in this way:

Reconciliation, followed by divorce, creates further problems of stress on the child. Abandonment by the noncustodial parent after the divorce may place the child particularly at risk.... Higher quality of parenting was related to good child adjustment regardless of type of family marital status (a relationship likely to be interactional). Economic factors such as low income, inadequate income, and a sharp drop in income; continued family conflict; and quality of parenting are all factors that affect that context. (p. 65)

Grounded in Piaget's developmental theory, Hodges interprets his research and the work of other researchers to identify parenting issues as a primary variable in determining adaptation to parental divorce.

Hetherington (1991) has researched long-term outcomes of divorce in a variety of parallel studies. She summarizes hypotheses about long-term outcomes. She describes a movement toward a theoretical perspective of transitional adaptation for children as gathered

through various research, including her studies. In her summary, she notes that children's temperament is a key determinant in their adaptation to the pervasive changes in family function and structure. Hetherington adopts a perspective viewing divorce and remarriage as a life transition. People negotiate this life transition with varying degrees of skill. Our ability to negotiate this transition is contingent on complex relationships between age, "sex, temperament, family stress, protective factors and social competence." This is further modified by coping styles which range from externalizing to internalizing behaviors (pp. 165-190). She notes the weakness of studies limited to white, middle class populations which may appropriately generalize to other populations.

Walker (1986) critiques past and present research into the legacies of divorce for children. Her approach is transitional. Walker designed a survey and solicited responses through the media. She distributed the survey to more than 1,000 individuals with a return rate of 35%. Responses came from 32 states and 3 Canadian provinces (p. 27). Walker's position, that children of divorcing parents cope well and have few problems, is as difficult as the former perspective. In Walker's open-ended survey, some questions appear to elicit responses which minimize consequences of parental divorce. She concludes: "If they were having a few problems, it was more likely the result of how other people were acting and feeling about divorce than of how they themselves were feeling" (p. 208).

#### Pastoral Care Perspectives

I encountered few resources in pastoral care. Although a few key exceptions generated reflection and growth in developing the research survey and my own theological construct. I gleaned many theological and care-sharing perspectives from Morgan (1985).

Morgan does not deal specifically with the impact of divorce on children. He primarily focuses on the impact of divorce and the resultant need for pastoral care for divorcing couples in the community of faith. Morgan deals constructively with the dual perspectives pastoral care-sharers seek to hold in tension. They try to maintain creative tension between the "biblical ideal" for marital relationships and the heartbreak involved in the reality of divorce for individuals, families and communities of faith. His suggestions influenced the developing model for responsiveness in pastoral care. I cite Morgan's influence on the developing model in Chapters Three and Four.

One pastoral caresharer wrote out of his own experience of parental divorce. Archibald Hart's (1982) slim volume about children and divorce was perceptive and enlightening by focusing my awareness on personal process. Hart incorporates his experience of family divorce with pragmatic suggestions for parents and pastoral care-sharers. His description of process, drawn from personal and professional experience, helped me articulate my own response and what I needed in pastoral care. This process enabled me to shape questions for the survey and find responses which elicited further sharing from my participants. Hart formulates his understanding of the legacies of divorce in terms similar to Wallerstein and Beal.

I explored several dissertations, included in References. Miller's (1992) grounds her dissertation developmentally in Eriksonian theory. Capps' work with Erikson informed and shaped her work theologically. Miller's description of a pastoral approach of trustbuilding in the context of an experience of betrayal through the person and nature of Jesus as "Invitation, Appeal, and Challenge to risk" (p. i) stimulated reflection on participants' responses to my

survey. Miller's extensive analysis of research literature enriched my understanding of issues. Her findings are congruent with my summary of clinical literature.

### **Summary**

The perception of negative or pathological impact from parental divorce moves in cycles. In the 1960's, divorcing parents were encouraged to think their children would benefit from the parents' reduced stress. Some studies began to question this belief noting that stresses due to reduced income, social status and cutting off from non-custodial parent and kin were counterproductive. Divorce reduced some of the relational stresses yet these other stressors may have distorted the adaptive process for children. Recently, theorists and researchers such as Emery, Ahrons and Hetherington argue that divorce is a normal transition and part of the adaptive process.

Wherever we place ourselves in this framework, adults and children in divorcing families require resources and support in their adaptive process. Stimulated by Berner's reflections about the need for continual reworking of the transitions, I chose to ask adults from divorced families to explore with me what their resources were in their adaptive and healing process. I discuss and tabulate their responses in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **Precipitating Questions**

Pastoral care for divorcing families continues to create challenges; philosophically, theologically and practically. Several psychoeducational models for group work with children provide peer and counsellor support for talking about feelings and adapting to new family configurations. Counselling agencies, schools and churches frequently offer these programs. Reviewing program models prompted questions. "How do individuals describe the pastoral care they received through this adaptational or healing process? How do they envision pastoral care for others confronting the dilemma of family divorce?"

#### **Approach**

The approach is exploratory, investigating perceptions of an individual's process of coping with and adapting to parental divorce. It is a pilot study, intended to elicit reflective data leading to hypothesis formulation about responsive pastoral care with divorcing families.

#### **Participants**

This qualitative study reviews single interviews with 8 individuals. Parents of these adult participants divorced, or permanently separated, at least 5 years before the interview. Although three participants experienced parental divorce as adults, their parents separated temporarily and reconciled during their youth. Two male participants experienced parental divorce twice. Gender distribution was equal. Participants are working- or middle-class, white individuals from Judeo-Christian backgrounds living in a tri-city area of Southwestern Ontario.



### Interview

Interviews lasted approximately one and one-half hours. A semi-standardized series of open-ended questions guided the interview process. Responses were audiotaped, transcribed and submitted to the participants for review and editing. Transcriptions include no identifying information for participants or for third parties, whether individuals or organizations.

### Data Analysis

Following review by participants, the interviewer coded and analyzed data. Tabulated data analysis notes gender difference in reported experience. Audiotapes will be erased or destroyed. Coded transcripts including no means of identification remain with the author.

### Comment on Interview Process and Results

#### Coding and Analysis Procedure

The study utilized a simple code for participant responses. The code focused on key questions: "What resources ...? How was the community of faith for you? How would you suggest the community of faith minister?" Participants noted resources, tabulated as: Self (inner), significant other, mother, father, siblings, extended family, surrogate family and spirituality/faith. Participants expressed faith community responses, tabulated as: emotional support, encourage (hope), listen, practical support, faith development and acceptance (nonjudging). Participants suggested several practical responses, tabulated as practical support suggestions. I coded responses with "+" for positive responses, "0" for neutral responses, and "-" for negative responses. I collated responses by gender and collectively. I noted minor differences in gender response. Since differences are so minor, there is insufficient

information to discern whether gender or personal adaptive response of participants influences the variant responses.

Because of the limited sample size and the emphasis on qualitative responses, I employed no statistical tests for the coded data. Appropriate tests with a larger sample include Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) and Fisher's Exact Tests.

The interviews took place in the Waterloo Region of Ontario between December 22, 1994 and March 7, 1995. The eight subjects agreed to participate in the survey on the recommendation of acquaintances interested in this pilot study. Two respondents are therapists; two are wives of pastoral counsellors. Of the respondents, two are sisters.

The average female respondent is 35.5, married, has 1.5 children and was 25.75 years old at the time of parental divorce. The average female participant has some college or university experience. The average male is 27 years old, engaged or married, has one child and was 13.3 years old at the time of parental divorce. The average male participant has completed university. One half of the males surveyed, experienced two parental divorces before the age of 24. All participants are protestant, although one male was Catholic before his mother's remarriage. One male and one female presently claim no affiliation with "organized religion." Both identify nurturant communities of faith in their healing process.

Tables on the following pages summarize the research data. Table 1 locates the participants demographically. Table 2 classifies coping and healing resources identified by participants and the perceived importance of these resources for them. Table 3 notes participants' perception of faith community response for them as they worked through

parental divorce. Table 4 maps participants' vision for faith community response. Table 5 categorizes practical responses and their importance as detailed in interviews.

**Table 1: Demographic Representation**

Subject	Code	Age	Marital Status	# of Children	Age at Divorce	Years post Divorce	Education	Religious Affiliation
1	F1	40	Married	2	29	11	Grade 11	Protestant
2	F2	38	Married	2	(20)/33	(18)/5	BRI 3rd year University	Baptist
3	F3	35	Separated	2	(17)/30	(18)/5	2 years college	Evangelical
4	F4	29	Married	0	11	18	Post Master's	Protestant
5	M1	34	Married	3	18	16	Grade 12	Evangelical
6	M2	24	Engaged	0	5/(22)	19/(2)	1 year University	Lutheran
7	M3	28	Married	1	10/16	18/12	Post Master's (2)	United Church
8	M4	22	Single	0	16	6	B.A	Protestant

High	F	40		2	33	18
Low		29		0	11	5
Mean		35.5		1.5	25.75	9.75

High	M	34		3	12	19
Low		22		0	5	6
Mean		27		1	13.3	14.2

High	(All)	40		3	33	19
Low		22		0	5	6
Mean		31.25		1.25	18.66	10

F = Female M = Male Code F1, M1, etc

**Table 2: Coping & Healing Resources**

Subject	Resources							
	(Self (Inner)	Significant Other	Mother	Father	Siblings	Extended Family	Surrogate Family	Spirituality/Faith
F1	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0
F2	+	+		0	+	+	+	+
F3	+	0	+	0	+	-	-	+
F4	+	0	0	0	+	0	+	+
M1	+	0	+	0	+	0	+	+
M2	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+
M3	+	+	+	-	+	0	+	+
M4	+	0			-	-	+	0
<b>F:</b>	4+ 00 0-	2+ 20 0	1+ 20 1-	1+ 30 0-	4+ 00 0-	1+ 20 1-	2+ 10 1-	3+ 10 0-
<b>M:</b>	4+ 00 0	2+ 20 0-	2+ 00 2	1+ 10 2-	2+ 00 2	1+ 20 1	4+ 00 0-	3+ 10 0-
<b>Total:</b>	8+ 00 0	4+ 40 0	3+ 20 3	2+ 40 2	6+ 00 2-	2+ 40 2-	6+ 10 1-	6+ 20 0-

**Table 3: Participants' Experience of Faith Community Response**

Subject	Faith Community Response					
	Emotional Support	Encourage (Hope)	Listen	Practical Support	Faith Development	Acceptance (Nonjudging)
F1	+	+	+	+	+	+
F2	+	+	+	0	+	-
F3		-	0	0	0	0
F4	+	0	0	0	0	+
M1	+	+	0	0	+	+
M2	+	+	+	0	+	+
M3	+	+	0	0	+	0
M4	0	0	0	0	+	+
<b>F:</b>	3+ 00 1	2+ 10 1-	2+ 20 0-	1+ 30 0-	2+ 20 0-	2+ 10 1
<b>M:</b>	3+ 10 0	3+ 10 0-	1+ 30 0-	0+ 40 0-	4+ 00 0-	3+ 10 0-
<b>Total:</b>	6+ 10 1-	5+ 20 1-	3+ 50 0-	1+ 70 0-	6+ 20 0-	5+ 20 1-

Response Code + = Positive 0 = Neutral - = Negative

**Table 4: Participants' Vision For Faith Community Response**

Subject	Envisioned Faith Community Response					
	Emotional Support	Encourage (Hope)	Listen	Practical Support	Faith Development	Acceptance (Nonjudging)
F1	+	+	+	+	+	+
F2	+	+	+	+	+	+
F3	+	+	+	+	+	+
F4	+	+	+	+	+	+
M1	+	+	+	+	+	+
M2	+	+	+	0	+	+
M3	+	+	+	+	+	+
M4	+	+	+	0	0	+
<b>F:</b>	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-
<b>M:</b>	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0-	2+ 20 0-	3+ 10 0	4+ 00 0-
<b>Total:</b>	8+ 00 0-	8+ 00 0-	8+ 00 0-	6+ 20 0-	7+ 10 0-	8+ 00 0

**Table 5: Participant's Suggestions for Practical Support in Communities of Faith**

Subject	Practical Support Suggestions					
	One-on-One Help	Educational	Support Groups	Skill Development	Surrogate Family Care	Mediating Hope & Trust
F1	+	0	+	0	+	+
F2	+	+	+	0	+	+
F3	+	+	+	+	+	+
F4	+	0	+	0	+	+
M1	+	+	+	+	+	+
M2	+	+	+	+	+	+
M3	+	0	0	0	+	+
M4	+	-	0	-	+	0
<b>F:</b>	4+ 00 0-	2+ 20 0-	4+ 00 0-	1+ 30 0-	4+ 00 0-	4+ 00 0
<b>M:</b>	4+ 00 0-	2+ 10 1-	2+ 20 0-	2+ 10 1-	4+ 00 0-	3+ 10 0
<b>Total:</b>	8+ 00 0-	4+ 30 1-	6+ 20 0-	3+ 40 1-	8+ 00 0	7+ 10 0

Response Code. += Positive 0 = Neutral - = Negative

### **Discussion of Significant Responses**

All participants felt their greatest resources were inner resources as they coped with parental divorce. Most indicated that a significant other and one or more members of their original family comprised what one man termed, "primary emotional resources." One woman lamented, "I was really alone. I was looking after my sister and brother." Another woman said her future husband and twin sister formed her primary resources. She said:

All we did was cry.... we both felt the same ... like ... we could comfort each other, but we didn't know how to objectify or anything else. [Husband] helped me to realize ... two sides.... I had him to talk to. [My sister] and I had more or less just to hold each other and cry ... and be angry together.... you can be so angry, you can cry so much ... you don't feel that way any more.... after a while, you start to talking about it ... in little bits.... When we were growing up ... once in a while ... we'd hear the word "divorce" come up and we would just shake ... like the whole world was going to end.

When asked who was there for her, another respondent commented "people were there for my mother.... I don't think anybody ever talked to me.... Abandoned comes to mind.... Alone.... I would have welcomed anything.... I guess I was really cold."

Three women and three men identified the importance or increased importance of a personal sense of spirituality or developing faith in their adaptation to parental divorce. In the context of spiritual development and adaptation six participants highlighted the experiences of surrogate family within a community of faith. These surrogate relationships facilitated relational healing for them. One young man experienced his adoptive parents' divorce at the age of 5. When asked about parental resources post-divorce, he responded: "My dad couldn't afford to ... keep me ... so he sent me to his mom and dad.... and they were there for me and that's about it.... I went to their church. I felt very accepted by that church."

Participants in this study identified surrogate relationships as part of the community of faith. I believe surrogate relationships constitute an informal faith community, and should be part of a formal faith community. I find it interesting that the young man who indicated the impact of faith development as neutral decisively expressed the healing that occurred in a particular surrogate family relationship for him as part of a faith community. He commented:

As far as a faith community, that's not really important any more. I think the hardest part of my life that I've ever gone through was when I was 15, running away and that [just prior to parental divorce]. I didn't have a faith community then.... It wasn't till I was 17 that I started going to church of my own accord, mainly for religious reasons, not for emotional support. I just don't want any more to rely on anybody.... In regards to a faith community, I think what I really want is, it would be nice to have some intimate friends, it would be nice, but in fact I don't think it's going to come to that. Having a body of believers to be with, a faith community, hasn't been important for me so far. Just having people around is important.... I think there has been one relationship in the past year and a half that had nothing to do with the divorce, but it has been helpful. I'm certainly grateful that I met this person. It was just a difficult time in my life and this person was there for me.... I'd like to think that my background hasn't had an influence. I'd like to think that....

Support for responsive pastoral care surfaces in the differing perceptions of faith community response by the sisters in the survey. The elder sister experienced support in all areas but practical support and acceptance, though she felt her husband's professional ministry limited her ability to express her pain openly within the faith community. She deplors:

My husband was in ministry, we were it! ... There was no one for us and I often think that if someone had cared to give us some pastoral care, the grieving process and the giving over ... would have been a little easier... because [my husband] was a pastor, we were it for each other. Even our area pastor, sort of like a bishop, didn't show up.... There was nobody really around.... I was my mother's support.... That ... put me in the role as a peer rather than as her child.... I have a couple of good friends who will listen and will pray with me and for me.

The younger perceived negative responses within her faith community until her recent marital separation. In that process, she moved and entered a different faith community. Her new faith community provides "practical and emotional support" for her and for her young children, evidenced by the concrete suggestions she offered. Broad categories for practical support within faith communities develop out of her responses and those of other participants.

Participants expressed an optimistic, perhaps idealistic, vision of faith community response. One male participant moderated the idealism. He expressed a personal philosophy that caresharers need not buffer all the rough spots. He states: "My job ... [is] to let them know that 'life can suck *and there is a God!*'"

All participants willingly and openly shared their pain. They each expressed a personal hope that this research project establishes some foundation for further study and dialogue within communities of faith and pastoral care.

Perhaps the most significant response from participants is incidental. Most participants, either in interview responses or conversation about the process, assert their aversion to being isolated or perceived as different. Therefore, they express reluctance about the efficacy of targeted support groups. Some express it in terms of wanting to "get on with life." Others resist being labelled as "children of divorce." I quote a lengthy comment from one individual in Chapter Four (see p. 60). Other representative comments include:

... it was something that happened, I didn't do it. I didn't have any control over it.... It was personal because it did happen to our family.... I've gotten so sick and tired of people saying "because of this or that I can do whatever, I can be whatever and it's all because of the fact my parents divorced and I'm going to be a crummy dad, or I don't care about anything or whatever."

Another:



... well that's life and there is nothing I can do about it. You've got to live on and look forward to the future.... it happened. I want to deal with the past but I don't want to rehash everything, I don't want to go through it again.... I don't want to live in the past. I want to get on with my life.

### **Summary**

Reflecting on these and other responses I both affirmed and redefined assumptions about requisite pastoral care with adult children of divorce. I began the project convinced that long term legacies of divorce necessitate pastoral caresharing with target populations of adult children of divorce.

Through reading and the interview process, I moved toward reconceptualizing the divorce process. I experienced growing awareness that the divorce process is more than a process of coping with crisis. The process of family divorce often includes both adaptation to crisis and life cycle transition. I began to comprehend divorce as a process of sundering relational bonds. In severing relational bonds, individuals experience feelings of isolation and alienation. Study participants frequently used the word "abandonment" to describe these feelings. This precipitated an awareness that caresharers must exercise caution. There is educative value in sharing knowledge about common experiences with those who share parallel life experience. Nevertheless, we risk amplifying feelings of isolation and alienation in our attempts to foster reconciliation and healing by isolating "target populations." This redefinition shapes the theological exploration of Chapter Three and becomes more explicit in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF DIVORCE

#### Theological Grounding

##### Interpreting Divorce Texts

Pastoral caresharers require a theology of divorce to ground themselves. Another prerequisite for grounding is an awareness of the complexity of maintaining creative tension between ideals and human reality. The biblical record manifests the intensity and duration of this conflict between ideal and reality in both testaments (Gn. 2:18-24; Dt. 24:1-4; Mal. 2:13-16; Mt. 5:31-32, 19:3-12; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18; I Cor. 7:2-16).

Apologists and exegetes persistently strive to integrate the ideal and compassion for the human context. Many rigorously interpret biblical texts, such as:

So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence.... So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless (Mal. 2:15-16, NRSV).

Suppose a man enters into a marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her and writes her a certificate of divorce; puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house and goes off to become another man's wife. Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled ... (Dt. 24:1-4, NRSV).

Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them 'male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" He said to them, "It was because you were so

hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery."

His disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given.... Let anyone accept this who can." (Mt. 19:3-12, NRSV)

Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. (Lk. 16:18, NRSV)

Shaner (1969) summarized New Testament scholarship from mid-nineteenth century until 1960. He noted seven, primarily Roman Catholic and Anglican or Episcopal scholars, who maintained the conservative position of "marriage indissoluble." Shaner identified two moderate scholars, a Baptist writing in 1866 and an Anglican writing in 1921 who affirmed scripture "condoned" divorce for adultery or perhaps sexual sins. He summarized the work of five liberal authors. These five interpreted the biblical texts to set out principles of permanence in marriage which may or may not apply to modern life (pp. 9-30). Following this summary with his exegesis of the above noted New Testament texts, Shaner concludes:

The apparently contradictory New Testament teachings on divorce are consistent and meaningful when understood in the context of history and culture. Jesus ... proclaimed unconditionally the permanent nature of marriage within the order of creation. Thus, he made no provision for divorce and remarriage.... Christ's original principle holds true for all time and is applicable in every situation. But so also can there be serious cases that tend to make a mockery out of the true nature and purpose of marriage.... The teaching and spirit of Christ demand patience, perseverance and forgiveness, but if these fail ... divorce and possible remarriage may be the lesser of two wrongs. Modern culture may create new problems that are adequate reasons for divorce, but no problem, however serious, should be held to break automatically the marriage relationship.... But where divorce is necessary for the well being of the parties involved it is the responsibility of the church to manifest forgiveness so that the divorced person can live purposefully within the Christian faith, and perhaps enter into a new meaningful marital fellowship,

a marriage so centered in Christ's love that divorce will be impossible (pp. 108-109).

Shaner's work is a recent discovery for me. His limited survey of historic interpretations and his exegesis of original texts enhance my work with the English texts. Shaner's integration of the New Testament teachings foreshadows the exegetical shift of the past three and one half decades.

Conservative New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce (1972) strove to uphold the integrity of precise translation of original texts. He evinced a profound respect and intense desire for pastoral care that is responsive to human need, not legislated by obdurate interpretations of scriptural texts. In the early '70s, I participated in a summer course Bruce conducted about the early Christian church. Continually, he grappled with the Christian's responsibility to maintain *balance* between law and grace. Bruce says:

... persons are more important than principles.... If it is the principles of Holy Scripture that we have in mind, we should remember that these principles are concerned in the main (if not indeed altogether) with personal relations: God's "I-thou" relations with us, and our relations with one another.... when I am asked for an exegesis of the New Testament pronouncements on the subject, I find no room for either divorce or remarriage, where Christian husbands and wives are concerned.... just as truth pushed to its logical conclusion in the intellectual sphere may become heresy, so truth pushed to its logical conclusion in the practical sphere may become tyranny.... Anyone exercising pastoral responsibility in the matter must consider first and foremost what action is dictated by Christian charity and compassion towards all the persons concerned, knowing that thus the will of God is most likely to be done and the honour of Christ most likely to be upheld. And it will often be discovered that love will find a way through where logic reaches a dead end (p. 193).

Working with the texts he calls "hard sayings of Jesus," Bruce (1983) writes:

Is it wise to take Jesus's rulings on this or other practical issues and give them legislative force? Perhaps not. The trouble is that, if they are given legislative force, exceptive clauses are bound to be added to cover special cases, and arguments will be prolonged about the various situations which are,

or are not, included in the terms of those exceptive clauses. It is better, probably, to let his words stand in their uncompromising rigour as the ideal at which his followers ought to aim. Legislation has to make provision for the hardness of men's hearts, but Jesus showed a more excellent way than the way of legislation and supplies the power to change the human heart and make his ideal a practical possibility (p. 62).

Bruce challenges me to personal and pastoral integrity with his passion for careful and caring consideration of the question of "what action is dictated by Christian charity and compassion towards all persons concerned." Using the perspective of this question and Jesus' actions as a basis of interpreting and making meaning of the divorce texts provides a context for the theological assumptions for this study.

Donald Joy (1985) former pastor, currently professor of Christian Education and human development at Asbury Theological Seminary, mentor and friend, writes about the intimate relational bonds of humans as "rehearsals" for the intimacy of "I-thou" relationship with God. He reflects Bruce when he describes divorce as deformed and broken bonds of intimacy and discusses Jesus' response to the Pharisees about divorce in Matthew 19. Joy comments on the frequent preoccupation with looking for loopholes in Jesus' words. He avers:

When we do that, we are indulging in the sort of legalism the Pharisees were using on Jesus. We are not likely to keep faith with the words of Jesus unless we study his actions and regard them as commentary on his words. Consider how blind we have been to his treatment of the much-divorced "woman at the well" of John 4. If we took the trouble to reconcile his words with his actions we would have an immediate rebuke on our preoccupation with making rules to cover every circumstance. Jesus simply will not get embroiled in the legal/civil aspects of marriage or divorce. Instead, Jesus reads hearts and treasures persons. He also is fanatical about working with the present circumstance instead of demanding some inhumane return to idealism which, if it ever existed, is now well out of reach without destroying other innocent persons....

Joy echoes Bruce, focusing on Jesus' valuing of persons and warning about the destructive power of idealism translated into legalism. Bruce and Joy profoundly impact my personal theology in many ways. They provide an exegetical context that grounds my unfolding image for pastoral care with divorcing families. In the Wesleyan tradition, which I share with Bruce and Joy, our concern with being pragmatic and "methodical" often influences us to lose sight of grace as the core of the gospel message.

Hudson (1973) compares the New Testament texts and concludes that they raise numerous questions for readers. He notes that each text asserts God's plan: "one man should be married to one woman" (p. 41). He points out that the phrase "as long as you both shall live" and similar accretions occur in the unfolding ceremonies of the Middle Ages (p. 41).

Hudson continues by exploring the tenet "one flesh." He comments:

In the light of the ideals about marriage -- two people living together in mutual respect, love, growth and helpfulness -- this oneness must be a much more significant and dynamic thing than sex. It is spiritual and emotional. It is more the feeling-flow between two people rather than anything legal or contractual. Once this is admitted, we have to ask ourselves whether a marriage really exists when two people cease to love each other. (p. 42)

Concurring with Bruce and Joy, Hudson encourages looking at the historic context of Jesus' recorded words while placing Jesus' response to individuals alongside. Hudson contrasts pivotal differences in valuing of women between the culture of Jesus and twentieth century. The differences include the philosophical views of relative gravity of a variety of relational sins. As well, Hudson notes the "exception clause" while placing it alongside the record of Jesus refusing to condemn the woman brought to him when caught in an adulterous liaison (Jn. 8:11). Further, Hudson comments on Jesus' statement: "Not everyone can accept this teaching" (Mt. 19:10-12). He remarks that Jesus "adapts the rule to individual human

nature (p. 44-47). I agree with Hudson and Joy that Biblical interpretation which accepts harsh pronouncements and disregards the compassionate words and behavior of Jesus is perplexing. Hudson queries:

... what are we to conclude about divorce and remarriage? That only those who come under the "exceptive clause" have a right to remarriage? That, following the Mark and Luke versions of what Jesus said, that none who divorce can remarry? Or that he was speaking out against a vicious custom of casual and irresponsible divorce, therefore the ideals he set forth must not be turned into universal, ironclad rules for all men and women under all circumstances? (p. 48-49)

If pastoral caresharers take Christ's words and relational behavior as a model, we must "unite our Christology (who Christ is) and anthropology (who we are)" (p. 53).

Hudson also addresses the troublesome Pauline texts in I Corinthians. He argues that:

whether Paul claimed he was speaking for the Lord ... or for himself, he was [*sic*] speaking to the human condition of one Christian community. The principles of not being "a stumbling block ... (10:32), of being "sure that every thing is done properly" ... (14:40), ... -- these underlying attitudes may guide the churches of all times and places. (pp. 64-65).

He continues:

... I must take my stand on the fact that it is un-Christian to appeal to Paul's stand on divorce and remarriage as a means of either preventing an individual from finding his own leadership, or in labeling him as sinner (adulterer) if he remarries.... If we "pull the rules" ... we lapse out of the New Testament era and fall into the Old Testament. (p. 65)

I find it incomprehensible that Bible students look at these texts unequivocally. In their inflexibility, they neglect to consider the import of Jesus' and Paul's concern with law and spirit of the law. Jesus reminded his critics that: "The sabbath was made for human kind, and not humankind for the sabbath" (Mk. 2:27). Readers frequently substitute "law" for "sabbath" when reading this text. In the RSV rendering of II Cor. 3:6 we read: "for the

written code kills, but the Spirit gives life." I find it important to place these statements about the tension between law and humankind alongside Paul's affirmation in I Cor. 7:15 where he condemns divorce while reminding his readers "it is to peace that God has called you."

### **Pastoral Care Grounding**

#### Considerations of Pastoral Ethics

In his description of the roots of pastoral care, Browning reflects on his understanding of Jesus' position on law. His framework echoes the discussion on textual interpretation. Browning utilizes the work of Erwin Goodenough to describe Jesus and his stance regarding law. Browning adopts Goodenough's terminology and describes Jesus as "supralegalist." He defines supralegalism as:

the creative legalist -- i.e., the man [*sic*] who is imbued with a legal tradition but who, by virtue of unexplained creative acts, simultaneously idealizes certain aspects of the tradition while simplifying or eliminating other aspects.... In legalism, the letter of the law is sufficient; in supralegalism, the inner meaning, the deeper objective, the ideal direction of the law must become the guide. (p. 49)

Browning notes that supralegalism creates a double-bind. It frees from rigid codification while compelling one to strive toward:

nearly impossible visions of perfection which men [*sic*] sooner or later despair of attaining. When the wider principles of the supralegalist begin to degenerate once again into legalism and the letter of the law, one is often left with a new legalism that may be even more rigorous and complex than the one before.

(pp. 49-50)



Regarding Jesus' teaching about a variety of life concerns, Browning observes: "the church always has handled these sayings quite selectively, but ... has attempted ... to abide by some of them -- especially the ones on adultery and divorce" (p. 50).

Browning observes that adopting a supralegalist posture presupposes a legalist code. In the context of a culture without a dominant code, for the majority of people, there are significant pitfalls to avoid. He warns of the possibility of getting caught in the contradiction of opposing laws or principles. Browning also warns of the difficulty of becoming so preoccupied with changes that we neglect to consider issues. "What will be the new rules and value symbols that will replace the old ones? Also, what will be the continuity between the old and the new, if any" (p. 51)?

As Browning relates this to liberation ideologies, often a motivation for divorce, he notes: "liberation is only half of the truth and a dangerous half-truth at that. It fails to see that our problem is not ridding ourselves of legalism, but of modifying a dead legalism into a live moral tradition" (pp. 51-52). This admonition foreshadows the ethical implications for pastoral care with divorcing families. Individuals often attempt to change without considering how they will replace the former relationships. Nor do they consider what they wish to maintain from former relationships.

#### Response of the Community of Faith to Divorce

##### Historically: Through 1950

At its inception the Christian church experienced conflict about its role with divorced persons and families. The conflict persists with limited resolution today. We noted the initial

conflict and some of the historic positions in the discussion of biblical texts at the outset of this chapter.

The dissension continued through the period of the Church Fathers into the period of pre-Reformation and Reformation. Hudson (1973) describes Erasmus' position on the divorce texts. He interprets Erasmus' position on divorce, as "the Gospel had superseded the law of Moses" (p. 68). Hudson continues to reflect on Erasmus' position, saying: he cites youths who are caught in marriage through wine and drunkenness, saying that such would lead to mutual quarrels, irremediable hatred, ... nothing but evil.... if they cleave to each other they perish twice ... but if they are allowed to divorce and remarry, they should both be outside peril" (p. 69). According to Hudson, this position countered the position taken by many of his contemporary bishops. Morgan (1985) notes that Bucer unsuccessfully challenged his peers, theologians and clergy, to change their legalistic views of divorce with no success (p. 61).

By mid-17th century, John Milton reasserted the need for a different interpretation of the divorce passages and for a different, more caring response from church and society. Milton wrote several divorce tracts beginning in 1643. Some believe *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* speak to the issue of divorce (Hudson, p. 70). Milton wrestles with the same passages noted above in *Tetrachordon*, his final work devoted to divorce. Milton discusses God's call to peace (I Cor. 7:15),

To peace, not to bondage, not to brabbles and contentions with him who is not pleas'd to live peaceably, as mariage and christianity requires. And where strife arises from a cause hopelesse to be allay'd, what better way to peace then by separating that which is ill joyn'd? It is not divorce, that first breaks the peace of family, as som fondly comment on this place, but it is peace already brok'n, which, when other cures fail, can only be restor'd to the faultles person

by a necessary divorce. And Saint *Paul* heer warrants us to seeke peace, rather then to remain in bondage. If God hath call'd us to peace, why should we not follow him, why should we miserably stay in perpetual discord under a servitude not requir'd? [spelling and italics in original text] (pp. 688-689)

I first encountered this passage in my undergraduate work in English literature at a denominational college. Milton's words resonated with my fledgling interpretation of the New Testament. They echoed my initial movement in redefining a theology of divorce in the context of my experience of parental divorce. Conversely, I felt overwhelming sadness that, at least within my denominational context, we remained stuck in legalistic interpretations that mirrored those of Milton's contemporaries.

Shaner's review of interpretive approaches, noted earlier, reflect the range of historic attitudes adopted by the Christian church in response to divorce and divorced families. In the main, the role of the Christian church was admonitory, or punitive, frequently engaging in blaming/shaming behaviors which victimized individuals or families. Since 1960 many denominations are more open and receptive to divorce and divorced families within the communities of faith. Indeed, when my parents, a pastoral couple, separated in 1967 and divorced in 1969, I experienced persistent shaming behaviors within my community of faith. In 1989, college classmates divorced and the wife experienced significant blaming while her pastor/husband experienced supportive care from denominational leadership. This indicates profound shift within a particular community of faith, although it demonstrates the persistence of former ideological and theological beliefs.

Transition: Since 1950

Morgan (1985) and Shaner (1969) summarize dominant themes of change in attitude and action within various organized communities of faith. Shaner notes the following denominational positions as of 1969;

... *Episcopal Church* repudiated the exception for adultery ... remarriage only for nullity.

... *Discipline of The Methodist Church* permits remarriage for the "innocent person" where the cause ... was adultery or other "vicious conditions"

... the United Lutheran Church in America ... marriage as an indissoluble union and that divorce and remarriage violate God's order of creation. But God in his love accepts the sinner and deals with him [*sic*] according to his [*sic*] need. The church sees the possibility of remarriage, but the basis for decision is loving concern for man [*sic*] in his actual situation. A person seeking remarriage must recognize his [*sic*] responsibility in the divorce, give evidence of repentance, forgive his [*sic*] former partner, give assurance that he [*sic*] will fulfill obligations to those involved in the former marriage, show evidence of his [*sic*] Christian faith, and be prepared to undertake the responsibilities of a new marriage.

... Presbyterian Church U.S.A. .... the Confession of Faith states that the corruption of man may put asunder what God has joined together; remarriage may be granted on grounds explicitly stated in Scripture or implicit in the gospel, in keeping with Christ's redemptive gospel ...

... United Church of Christ ... encourages ministers to satisfy themselves through conference that a divorced party has given evidence of sincere repentance and that the conditions leading to the former divorce are not present. (pp. 99-102)

These denominations continue to engage in a process of reevaluating attitudes toward divorce and the church's role and response to divorce. Several have adopted further changes since Shaner's writing. Morgan (1985) notes various individual attempts to address issues of divorce and the church. He cites Emerson, who argues that the divorced need to experience "realized forgiveness" or what Morgan describes as "an experience of fulfillment at the deepest level of life.... Marriage can die; realized forgiveness affirms this reality, but moves

beyond it to forgiveness which frees persons from the sin of broken marriages" (p. 52). Note that Emerson's ideology retains the focus on divorce as sin.

These positions represent the wider religious context in which my parents divorced. The 1974 *Book of Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church (basically the same text as the 1960 through 1969 editions) articulates the specific denominational context. It declares:

We do not permit members of the church to separate, to divorce, and to remarry except in those cases which accord with the counsel of the Word of God.... A member of the church will be considered guilty of adultery if the member marries one who has divorce a previous mate on any other than biblical grounds [here the emphasis was on the "exceptive clauses"]

The church must seek to be redemptive in all situations. We believe all sin except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit may be forgiven (Matthew 12:31). Therefore, those persons who have been involved in divorce on other than scriptural grounds prior to their Christian conversion and application for membership shall not for that reason be barred from membership. (pp. 51-52)

Additionally, the denomination permitted no individuals as candidates for ministry if they or their spouse divorced and remarried and a former spouse of either was alive (p. 175). Nor did the denomination recognize credentials of ministers from other denominations under the above conditions (p. 177). No wonder my father expressed a sense of relief when he confronted Emerson's position while working through his own divorce. Somehow retaining the focus on sin seemed important to his process. However, finding a community of faith to mediate an experience of "realized forgiveness," individually and communally, constituted a vital step in our family's healing process, particularly considering his remarriage.

The proliferation of divorces within the wider North American culture forced churches to continue reevaluation. Morgan (1985) comments on other individual theological perspectives. He summarizes Olshewsky as "effect[ing] a creative balance between grace and truth.... [L]etting go of the past in repentance ... approaches divorce as a confrontation with

the judgment of God but also as an opening to God's grace (p. 53). Morgan notes no consideration of the role of the community of faith by Olchewsky. Conversely, Morgan notes T. Craig Weaver's reconceptualizing of divorce perspective. He notes that Weaver challenges "the church to be redemptive in its response to persons and families experiencing divorce, to help them return to the life of the church (p. 54)." A living church or community of faith must engage in a dynamic process of redefining theology and roles or risk becoming entrapped in destructive legalism.

In approving the 1985 discipline, members of my denomination adopted radical changes in their doctrinal statement on marriage and divorce. The framework remains. Interpretive statements elucidate models for churches and pastoral response. For example, the *Discipline* adjures pastors and churches to provide premarital counselling. It instructs pastors and congregations to minister to both parties in marital crisis -- working toward reconciliation and conflict management (pp. 68-69). Perhaps the most revolutionary change is evident in position, initially drafted by Donald Joy, and adopted in 1985:

When the marriage of a member is in difficulty because either party has wronged the other, we counsel forgiveness and reconciliation as the highest Christian resolution. However, if the problem is some form of *porneia*, such as extramarital unfaithfulness or any unnatural sexual activity ... the marriage may be beyond recovery. Likewise, the desertion of the relationship by one partner ... may so seriously damage the marital bond that the marriage cannot be continued.

We recognize a divorce for any reason is always a tragedy and that often both spouses bear some degree of responsibility.... The church should surround any member whose marriage fails with Christian love during grief and healing. We should assist those who are hurting to draw near to God and endeavor to restore them to wholeness and to effective ministry within the body of Christ.

A member who has been divorced should submit to the counsel and follow the guidance of the membership care committee before considering remarriage. A member should follow the same procedures if considering marrying a believer who has been divorced.

When members divorce in violation of Scripture, or remarry without seeking or following the counsel of the membership care committee, the committee shall review the case and recommend to the official board appropriate action....

When such members repent and seek restoration they shall submit to the counsel and guidance of the membership care committee. Upon evidence of contrition and spiritual growth, the committee may recommend to the official board that they be restored. (pp. 69-70)

Similar revisions exist for ministerial candidates and ministers transferring credentials from other denominations. The Board of Bishops provides the counsel, guidance and review of the case rather than local pastors or membership care committees.

The Free Methodist Church in Canada separated from the North American church. The Canadian church adopted a *Book of Discipline* (1990) derived from the North American *Discipline*. In the General Conference, representatives revised the 1985 text. Currently, the *Discipline* advocates counsel with pastor and/or membership care committee. This revision addresses concerns about confidentiality within small, primarily family congregations. As well, the revisions reaffirm a more conservative, "exceptional" position (pp. 62-66).

### **A Theology of Divorce**

How then do I outline my personal theology of divorce. I ground my theology of divorce within the caresharing perspectives which encompass biblical texts on divorce within the lived exegesis of caring demonstrated in the gospel record of Jesus' life and ministry. I seek to contextualize, without offering "cheap grace," addressing the concern articulated by Bruce (1972) "what action is dictated by Christian charity and compassion towards all the persons concerned" (p. 173). Further, with Morgan (1985) the theology of divorce develops from a theology of marriage as covenantal relationship. Covenantal relationship requires

certain elements from covenanting participants. Morgan identifies elements of covenant in marriage as:

- (1) the initiative of love which creates the relationship;
- (2) the oath or vow of consent;
- (3) the loyal love which sustains the covenant;
- (4) the note of sacrifice.

This covenant of marriage is entered into by Christians in the presence of God and the community of faith. (pp. 62-63).

Covenant infers relationship between individuals. We enter covenants privately and acknowledge them in and through a community of faith. The multi-faceted relationship of Christian marriage includes: God, individuals, their families and their communities of faith. Relationships are vulnerable. Relational failure occurs through betrayal of covenant. Betrayal occurs through breach of faith by individuals, family and faith community. The community of faith has a role in caresharing with all parties, including the community of faith itself.

My definition of covenantal relationship grows out of my understanding of covenant as an Old Testament construct. Several Old Testament authors explore reasons for failure and paths for reconciliation. Prophets and other Old Testament authors identified shame, contrition and repentance as paths toward reconciliation. In 1992, I wrote my M.T.S. Comprehensive Paper on the pastoral implications of a positive valuing of shame based on Jeremiah 6:15. Walter Brueggemann (1989), commenting on that passage, describes the healthy movement from shame to repentance as healthy shame that enables individuals to take responsibility for their lives, for broken covenants, for relational failures, saying:

... God notices how we live and is deeply troubled. If God has noticed so clearly that we act in destructive ways, then I am also free to notice -- to stop the pretence.... But God has noticed. If heaven is brought to a momentary halt by my affront, then I also can acknowledge that little pieces of my life are



immobilized.... [W]hen God notices, I remember to blush as I have not done, because now I am in the presence of one who is embarrassed for me and with me. Perhaps the first sign that the numbness may subside is given at the throne when I blush deeply again.... The blushing is evoked by the seriousness with which God regards me.... *Anger at the throne is compounded by God's utter anguish at having hoped and been betrayed, at having yearned and failed.... our guilt causes not indignation but deep hurt at the throne.* (pp. 20-21).

In that paper I noted that until the latter part of the Twentieth Century few commentators addressed that text. I queried the significance of that observation. I wondered:

Was the focus on guilt so intense that it generated rejection of the healthy aspect of shame, shown in the ability to blush? ... Has the modern psychotherapeutic movement's recent recognition of "nourishing shame" impacted and informed contemporary exegesis? (Scott, 1992, p. 11)

Now, I wonder: Has the intensity of the church's historic focus on legalist interpretation of divorce texts created an atmosphere in which healthy shame became transmuted and

"shame became sin in search of forgiveness rather than a gift of grace." Shame is a gift of grace. It is the painful sense that "covenant has been violated and that our lives are relationally askew" (Binau, 1989, p. 138).... [I]n our attempts to avoid the pain of shame, we rename it as guilt and seek forgiveness and absolution, rather than restoration of relationships through reconciliation. (Scott, 1992, pp. 31-32)

Shame, contrition, repentance move toward "realized forgiveness" (see p. 37).

Relational healing in the covenantal context requires individuals and communities of faith to move dynamically through these stations on the pathway toward reconciliation.

### **Summary**

This chapter briefly surveys historic interpretations of divorce texts. It comments on ideological movement in various church communities, primarily North American protestant denominations. The chapter concludes with a personal theology of divorce. My experience

of parental divorce and my unfolding theological, spiritual and emotional awareness informs and shapes this personal theology of divorce. Engaging biblical texts, a variety of authors, personal reflection and dialogue with clients, peers, supervisors, friends and professors further refines and shapes my theology of divorce. The implications for pastoral care develop through placing the participants' responses in the context of my theology of divorce and awareness of trustbuilding as a key developmental task as articulated by Miller. Chapter Four moves toward developing a model for pastoral care with children of divorce. As an important aspect of that developmental process, I clarify definitions underpinning the developing model.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A RESPONSIVE MODEL FOR PASTORAL CARE

#### Visioning/Re-visioning Roles of the Community of Faith

##### Defining "Community of Faith"

Formulating initial concepts of my thesis proposal, I wrestled with defining the term "community of faith." I reflected on diverse interpretations of church and community of faith expounded in courses at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and in my participation in church settings across North America. Charles Foster (1990) roots his definition of church in "the recognition that any community draws upon a common set of images, metaphors, or principles which inform its visions, structures, and processes" (p. 84). Foster looks primarily at the educative task of community as one of binding or integrating present generations with past and future. This is a relational process. Patton (1993) defines community, in particular, a community of pastoral care as follows:

... the unity of persons ... in which each remains a distinct individual, ... one in which each realizes him- or herself in and through the other. Relationality does not negate individuality; it requires it. Genuine and mutual relationship ... are possible because individuality exists.... There is, ... a tension or dialectical relationship between the claims of relationality and of individuality, and the life of the community is most often expressed in terms of that fundamental tension.

God is the author of community, creating it as an expression of human relationality.... It is brought into being through human action, empowered through relationship to God. Through their vocation of caring for the earth, human beings learn to care for one another.... [T]he purpose of Christian community is not only to experience relationship, but also to experience relationship in order to empower ministry.

The church and other caring communities may be characterized as communities of action, of relationship and of meaning. (pp. 24-25)

These root definitions provide foundational principles for me. Pastor and theologian Howard Snyder (1975) affirms that the "Kingdom" [community of faith] is neither church

structure nor church structures. The Kingdom is the community of the king and the body of Christ (pp. 122-127). As pastoral caresharer, I work with careseekers to discover, develop and define their options and resources for transformation and growth. Communities of faith engage in a mutual process of transformation, growth, and shared pilgrimage. This is the essence of community of faith for me. One may not locate community of faith within any particular religious framework. Nevertheless, it is a dynamic caring community which finds purpose in relationship and in empowering ministry or caresharing.

#### Healing community vs. Community is healing

My vision of the healing function of community continues to unfold in this study. At first, I assumed that the church's vocation is to provide a healing community. I based this assumption on internalized teachings by theologians such as Robertson (1895). He states that the church or community of faith commits to a ministry of forgiveness and restoration of peace and "nourishing of faith and life" (pp. 116-118).

I also based the assumption on my internalization of Wesley's "Class Meeting." My concept of the "Class Meeting's" healing potential stems from discussion about the nature and mission of the church within my own community of faith. Among those who engaged in this debate, Snyder (1975/1978) urges us to reconsider, reevaluate and reexperience the healing potential of the class meeting structure (pp. 140-148). My engagement in this debate during my early adult years continues to influence and inform the developing model of pastoral care.

Recently, I reflected on my reading and the wealth of informative responses from participants and colleagues. I sensed my growing discomfort with the locus of power in the assumption that the church's vocation is to provide a healing community. This locates power

in "doing for" or "doing unto." I understand an appropriate use of power in relationships stimulates mutual growth and transformation. I believe relationships of mutual growth and transformation are community and community is healing.<sup>1</sup> At the core of relational healing we learn to maintain creative tension or establish harmony between love, power and justice, for and with ourselves, with family (nuclear and extended), with friends, in community, and with the God who creates and empowers relationships. This grows out of my integration of Tillich's systemic thought, which profoundly impacts my personal healing and my developing model for pastoral care.

### An Ethico-Theological Context

#### Faith

Central to my belief that community is healing, is my interpretation of scripture and of the Tillichian ethico-theological constructs of love, power, and justice as expressions of faith.

Tillich (1957) asserts:

Faith of the ontological type drives toward elevation above the separation of being from being. Faith of the ethical type drives toward transformation of the estranged reality. In both of them love is working....

... love is an implication of faith, ... the desire toward reunion of the separated ... since faith leads to action and action presupposes community, the state of ultimate concern is actual only within a community of action. (pp. 116-117)

For Tillich, and for me, communities of faith share ultimate concerns of being, expressed within centering and integrating individuals within the community. The ultimate

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout this paper *community* refers to qualities of relational experience or fellowship rather than referring to an identified, located organizational entity or society.

concern of integration, or of core identity, is the harmonious interaction of love, power, and justice.

The interdependent interplay of Tillich's system grounds my understanding that community *is* healing. Tillich (1954) permits no isolation of any one concept. He affirms that one can only deal with these from an ontological perspective. The ontological perspective becomes the keystone which ties his system together (p. 18). Tillich argues that love, power and justice, often considered synonyms for the nature of being, or ontology, form a unity which constitutes the basis for our understanding of being (p. 21).

### Love

Tillich defines the ontological nature of love in this way, "Life is being in actuality and love is the moving power of life.... the drive towards the unity of the separated" (p. 25). He develops this by describing the four constructs, or qualities, of love which are polarities of love. Disclosure of these qualities occurs in the polarity. The unity of these qualities is the ontological nature of love. These are qualities and not types of love. Perceiving the constructs as types seduces us into ranking them and not realizing that each of the qualities is present in each of the other qualities. As I read his treatment of *eros* and *philia* I noted in the margin, "are we in danger when we press for *community* and participation when we do not work to develop the potentials of this polarity for members of the group?" I wonder, are we asking members of communities of faith to do something which is impossible unless we first foster the potential qualities of love within them. In Tillich's terms, I wonder if we must find ways to stimulate and nurture "self-integration and self-creation" (pp. 30-32).

Power

Another fundamental in this keystone of being, is power. Tillich defines power as: "the possibility of self-affirmation in spite of internal and external negation. It is the possibility of overcoming non-being" (p. 40). Obviously, this is a dynamic process. Tillich uses the vivid image of constellations of powers to describe the results of human encounter with power. Tillich points out that within the context of group interactions power and power of being are hierarchical. He indicates that "the completely centred ... being ... has the greatest power of being" (p. 44). He issues a strong warning about one who is or participates in a strong center of power. He warns that one must be very careful not to abuse that power or to "degrade" it. He declares: "In the moment in which the representatives of the centre use the power of the whole for their particular self-realization they cease to be the actual centre, and the whole being without a centre, disintegrates" (p. 45).

In the context of work with divorcing and divorced families, there is a pervasive loss of trust and sense of personal betrayal. This loss of trust and sense of betrayal originates in the experiences perceived as abuse of power within the process of family divorce. For instance, children may experience a sense of parental and societal abuse of power when confronted with parental choices about custody and access and the loyalty conflicts that ensue

For Tillich, just as there is a unifying construct of love, so too love and power are unified. If love is concomitantly separation and reunion, so is power. He says: "The more reuniting love there is, the more conquered non-being there is the more power of being there is" (p. 49). For Tillich, love is the keystone for an understanding of power. Love also is the

keystone for an understanding of justice. In addition, the unity of this understanding of love and power is the keystone for an understanding of justice.

### Justice

As I understand Tillich, justice is the form or the shape of love. Thus, if love is the drive toward unity and power is the force and compulsion toward unity; then, justice is the form or shape of that unity. It is customary to describe justice as "an intrinsic claim," or "proportional." Tillich argues for what he terms creative or transforming justice which permits one to "change the proportion ... to fulfil those who according to proportional justice would be excluded from fulfilment" (p. 66). Tillich also framed it another way:

The demand becomes concrete in the "I-Thou" encounter. The content of the demand is therefore that the "thou" be accorded the same dignity as the "I"; this is the dignity of being free ... This recognition of the equal dignity of the "Thou" and the "I" is justice.... The unconditional demand ... confronts the power and impotence of being with justice, arising from the demand.... the ought is the fulfillment of the is. *Justice is the true power of being.* (Church, 1987, pp. 144-145, italics original)

If divorcing families do not accord dignity in the midst of conflict, then justice is not being done. The question arises: "How does one stimulate others to accord dignity when they firmly believe it is *undeserved*?" Perhaps stimulating respect is one aspect of the healing nature of community.

Tillich (1954/1987) described the ontological unity of these three elements. He observed that claims for justice do not disappear if they go unacknowledged and unheard. Rather, they may actually work to destroy the power structure (pp. 67-68). Is this not a vital part of the dynamic struggle with lack of trust and intimacy needs children of divorced



families experience? I believe these words summarize the healing potential within communities of faith:

*Love does not do more than justice demands, but love is the ultimate principle of justice. Love reunites; justice preserves what is to be united. It is the form in which and through which love performs its work. Justice in its ultimate meaning is creative justice, and creative justice is the form of reuniting love.* (p. 71, italics original)

As I reflect on this quote, I assume "community is healing." I begin to discern that working for creative justice within a community of faith implies a concern for personal boundaries, both for caresharers and careseekers. Tillich (1952) addresses this issue of personal boundaries several places. In *The Courage to Be*, he identifies the interdependence of participation within the community and within the self (p. 90). Tillich reminds me: "The courage to be is the ethical act in which man [*sic*] affirms his [*sic*] own being in spite of those elements of his [*sic*] existence which conflict with his [*sic*] essential self-affirmation" (p. 3). Respect for personal and communal boundaries becomes an ethical and justice issue when community moves toward healing.

### Praxis

This bridges into understanding Tillich's concept of *Praxis* and the communal effect of praxis. Tillich (1962c) says:

*Praxis* is the whole of cultural acts of centred personalities who as members of social groups act upon each other and themselves. *Praxis* in this sense is the self-creation of life in the personal-communal realm... under the dimension of spirit. (pp. 65-66)

Tillich identifies some concepts which are the aims of *praxis* and terms which express the nature of those concepts. The first aim of *praxis* identified is "the good." Fundamental to the "good" is justice which transforms both individual and society. One who functions in *praxis*

functions in a tension. The tension seeks to balance the actualization of personal good and justice with the actualization of the communal good and justice. This places the person in a position of being "subjected to all the tensions of culture ... and all the ambiguities of culture" (p. 68). Communities of faith regularly affirm and redefine the aims of *praxis* to facilitate healing.

I understand Tillich to name as the personal aim of *praxis* the development of "humanity" as the "sense of fulfilment of man's [*sic*] inner aim with respect to himself [*sic*] and personal relations." He correlates this with the communal aim for "justice as the fulfilment of the inner aim of social groups and their mutual relations" (p. 67). This correlation identifies clearly the tension which exists in the reality that at times creative justice may not always be just for all. Therefore, creative justice always involves risk taking. I would add, creative justice always involves risk making, an aspect of what Tillich calls the "courage to be." Risk is implicit because of Tillich's idea that creativity always remains in tension with the polarity of destruction.

In Tillich's enumeration of several personal ambiguities and the tensions created in grappling with those concepts, I hear the word of the prophet crying out: "*Be Aware!*" not, "*Beware!*" His message is a reminder of the interdependence of all of these polarities: "self-determination/other-determination, personal growth/depersonalization, holding back of self/giving of self, self-seclusion and self-surrender" (pp. 75-77). There is a challenge to risk. For to live creatively and in the unity which is love, all of these and other polarities must be embraced as unities and as unity. Awareness of, and embracing, all of these polarities is a function of the centered self.

### Leadership

Tillich addresses some of my questions about the community's role in healing when he discusses the nature of leadership. He identifies leadership as analogous to centeredness and as necessary for generating communal being, i.e., "self-integration and self-creation of a group" (p. 82). For Tillich, leadership involves representing the authority and power of the group as well as that of the person who is leader. He cautions, and again I hear the prophet crying "*Be aware!*":

this is true of voluntary groups whose chosen leaders manifest the same ambiguous motives as do political rulers.... the attempt to remove such a structure, for example, in a state of anarchy, is self-defeating because chaos breeds dictatorship.... (p. 82)

These are sobering words. As pastoral caresharer, I am aware of the power and authority inherent in my professional role. Yet, as I take seriously the dynamic relationships I must exercise that power with discretion.

### Forgiveness

The community's role in healing relationships requires us to address forgiveness. I discussed "realized forgiveness" (see p. 37). I interpret that concept within my conviction that healing the wounds of divorcing families begins with forgiveness. Each member bears personal responsibility for action or inaction in coming to this chaotic and kairotic moment. Each chooses a level of involvement in person to person encounters within the family structure and in the structure of the community of faith. Each member has experienced rejection and separation in the experience of the family and the community of faith.

Tillich (1952) describes forgiveness several ways. He calls it: "Accepting acceptance through being unacceptable." He says it is "independent of any moral, intellectual, or

religious precondition." He identifies it as "the fundamental experience in the encounter with God" (pp. 164-165). Forgiveness is foundational for "I-Thou" encounters whether between God and person, or person and person. Tillich elaborates:

Self-affirmation in spite of the anxiety of guilt and condemnation presupposes participation in something which transcends the self. In the communion of healing, ... the patient participates in the healing power of the helper by whom he [*sic*] is accepted although he [*sic*] feels himself [*sic*] unacceptable. The healer, ... represents the objective power of acceptance and self-affirmation. This objective power works through the healer in the patient.... embodied in a person who can realize guilt, who can judge, and who can accept in spite of the judgment. Acceptance by something which is less than personal could never overcome personal self-rejection.... But even if one is personally accepted it needs a self-transcending courage to accept this acceptance. (pp. 156-166)

This explanation of the healing process of forgiveness fulfills the definition of love stated earlier: "Love is the drive towards the unity of the separated" (Tillich, 1954/1987, p. 25).

Tillich indicates that the greatest conceivable separation is that of "self from self" (p. 25). Is that not what all too frequently happens in the process of families divorcing? Separation and cut-offs abound: spouse from spouse, non-custodial parent from child, family members from extended family members, identity within a nuclear family surrendered in the bifurcation and loss of role which results in cutting off large portions of identity.

### Creative Justice

The above discussions of love, power, justice, praxis, leadership and forgiveness, ground my understanding of what Tillich would describe as transforming or creative justice. He indicates a triad of behaviors involved in creative justice. This triad is: listening, giving and forgiving (p. 84). In the interdependence of Tillich's thought, creative justice is foundational for creative giving. He says: "Giving is an expression of creative justice if it

serves the purpose of reuniting love" (p. 85). Giving can and should be in response to both "intrinsic claims" and the "demand" to recognise the other as person.

Finally, we return to the element of forgiveness in creative justice. In defining forgiveness, Tillich cites Luther and Paul. Forgiveness means: "to accept as just him [*sic*] who is unjust." Although this seems to be a contradiction in terms, Tillich declares:

nothing less than this is the fulfillment of justice. For it is the only way of reuniting those who are estranged by guilt. *Without reconciliation there is no reunion.* [*italics mine*] Forgiving love is the only way of fulfilling the intrinsic claim in every being ... to be reaccepted into the unity to which it belongs ... that he [*sic*] be accepted who is unacceptable in terms of proportional justice. (p. 86)

This forms the basis of the ethico-theological framework from which I choose to develop a model of care. I read in Tillich's discussion of group relations a solemn warning. I include this long quote. To me, it proclaims the prophetic cry, "Be Aware!" It speaks with a word of truth about the nature of healing community.

The individual man [*sic*] is a social being, but the society does not create the individual. They are interdependent.... The centre of a social group is those who represent it.... It is not the group which decides but those who have the power to speak for the group and force their decisions upon all the members of the group.... The ruling group shares the tensions of power, especially the tension between power by acknowledgement and power by enforcement.... The law must be given in a creative act, and it is given by the ruling group. It must be applied to the concrete decision in a daring decision, and the decision is made by members of the ruling group.... those who are in power always do two things: they express the power and justice of being of the whole group; and, at the same time, they express the power and the claim for justice of themselves as the ruling group. (pp. 92-97)

Healing communities always struggle with these tensions of ethical justice.

Caresharers within communities of faith must acknowledge these tensions. Individual support networks constitute informal healing communities. When encouraging the development and

enrichment of these support systems, caresharers must work toward creatively sharing these tensions within the support system.

#### A Pastoral/Systemic Context

Earlier, I referred to Donald Joy's influence on my personal and pastoral formation. I want to draw on his resources for pastoral care. Dr. Joy manifests his artistry with graphic descriptions for complex theory. He summarized Mansell Pattison's work with the psychosocial kinship system very simply. Pattison (1977) discusses five variables between individuals and personal systems. These include: frequent interaction, emotional intensity, positive emotion, positive emotional regard able to provide assistance, and a symmetrically reciprocal relationship (pp. 18-19). Joy (1985) describes the relational system as a "four-sided, ... trampoline supported by four groups of people whom ... we need to have, in our system" (p. 3). He continues, "Now look at the hand-held trampoline. Imagine it as a square, with five to eight people on each side. These sides represent four groups...:" first degree family, second degree relatives, friends and associates (p. 4).

I adapt Joy's model. Changes accommodate reduced family size, and physical and emotional distance from first and second degree relatives through divorce, emotional cut-off and an increasingly mobile society. To describe an individual's relational system, I adopt a fixed trampoline with spotters. I locate all family groups on one side, including surrogate family relationships. On the fourth side are community resources: i.e.. community of faith, social agencies and other volunteer affiliations. These changes maintain Joy's view: "A healthy system is dynamic ... alive and always renewing itself ... [and] replaces the lost intimacy over a transition period (p. 6). The fixed trampoline with spotters balances power

more evenly within the system and demonstrates reciprocity in relationship. The trampoline is a metaphor for a network of caresharers. The trampoline diagram dynamically portrays *community*: qualities of relational experience within a network of caresharing. (See p. 46)

Figure 1: Trampoline Diagram of a "Network of support"



Defining Responsive Pastoral Care

As I developed a working title for this thesis, I engaged in an intense evaluative process. I sought precise words to convey my intention. I proposed to solicit input from participants with the goal of co-creating a plan for pastoral care. Initially, I opted for the phrase "Developing a model for pastoral care for adult children of divorce." That statement conveys an inappropriate use of "power over" or "doing for" careseekers. Finally, I chose the title "Toward developing a model for *responsive pastoral care* with adult children of divorce." My choice reflects a bias developed in seminary and clinical training where I experienced encouragement to explore my use of self in accord with VanKatwyk's (1988) "Helping Styles Inventory." Consequently, I operate from a conviction that an atmosphere of creative listening which attends to and responds to careseekers nurtures health and growth.

In discussing my work with Dr. Delton Glebe, he commented that Paul Johnson used the term "responsive pastoral counseling." Paul Johnson wrote the first pastoral counselling books I read, more than twenty years ago. I am fascinated at the way Johnson's terminology impacts my choice. Johnson (1953) defines counselling: "*Counseling is a responsive relationship arising from expressed need to work through difficulties by means of emotional understanding and growing responsibility*" (p. 73, italics original). Johnson (1967) sums up his view of the "unifying concept to give central meaning to the experiences of human life" within the word "*response*" (p. 7, italics original). Placing this in the context of the Gn. 1 and 2 account of the creation of human life, he notes:

Persons are created in the image of a person by giving forth from each to each the breath of life. No one is born alone to live alone but to grow into personhood by the mediation of persons who exchange life for life. Only a



person can mediate for a person in the search to fulfill his human destiny. The work of counseling is such a mediation of person for person

When we see counseling in these terms we may call it responsive counseling. A counselor is responsive to the person by caring enough to listen, to accept, and to search profoundly with him [*sic*] for the meaning of his [*sic*] life. (pp. 7-8)

This definition forms a contrapuntal melody in harmony with the theme of "community is healing." Within a pastoral care framework, I define "responsiveness:"

- 1) a willingness listen actively and creatively;
- 2) a willingness to respect doubt and confusion;
- 3) a refusal to participate in power abuses within the counselling relationship;
- 4) an ability to communicate empathy and concern; and,
- 5) a willingness to be appropriately vulnerable to facilitate the process of working through painful issues in the context of the counselling relationship.

This responsive relationship is specific to the counselling relationship, but is also integral to the interrelationship of the community of faith. This personal example may demonstrate my definition of responsiveness and my initial formulation of a model for pastoral care with divorcing families.

I was sixteen when my parents separated. Few within our community of faith accepted the possibilities of marital dissolution, let alone supported families in that process. In my initial pain, I turned to one young man whom I considered a surrogate brother for support. He was principal and math teacher in a small boarding school in a rural Appalachian community. This man declared his moral inability to accept my position about my parent's choices. Yet he enacted responsive pastoral care by accepting me as a student. He listened to my story of my pain and confusion. He communicated his loving and prayerful concern for me and for my family. He encouraged me to continue wrestling with issues and

decisions. Also, he respected my strengths by asking me to care for and listen to the painful stories of some of my dorm-mates.

Several weeks later, my father asked an older couple to allow me to stay with them for several weeks. They, and their daughter, who later married my father, offered responsive pastoral care for my father, my sister and me. Within these surrogate family relationships, they functioned as significant others providing nurture, acceptance, mirroring, respect and mutual vulnerability. Their caresharing created an atmosphere for me to renegotiate issues of trust/mistrust, shame and doubt/autonomy, and guilt/initiative. In their loving response, I emerged with a renewed capacity to sustain intimacy. The personal context of their faith restored my faith development within community.

### **Proposed Models for Pastoral Care**

Before proposing a model for responsive pastoral care based on research with adult children of divorce, I note briefly other proposed and useful models. One model is a structured psychoeducational group designed to reach children of various ages through a variety of structured interventions: "feeling faces," role-plays, art and play therapy strategies. Structured groups exist at Kitchener Interfaith Pastoral Counselling Center, Guelph-Wellington Counselling Centre and a variety of other community agencies. Schools and churches offer similar peer support groups adopting structured curricula and group names such as "Banana Splits" or "Rainbows" (Levine, 1995, pp. 93-94). As well, many agencies and churches offer peer support groups for divorcing parents to assist them in their transition. Some participants in this study suggest structured peer support groups may provide helpful initial support,

although they appeared hesitant. The reluctance centered on issues of labelling, isolation, and pathologizing individuals. One woman commented:

It's so important that a person is dealt with as an individual. You can't come out as a "divorced family person" because they'll just be feeding on that the rest of their lives.... I think it's good [support groups] in the initial stages ... they can tell each other feelings and cry about it and be strong about it, but it comes down to they have to learn to deal with their own problems.... You can't just sit in a group for the rest of your life and pout about it. I feel like I'm a stronger person and could help ... through times like this because I have been through it.

Another participant stated:

The world is the way it is and divorce causes inconveniences and the family has to work them out. My job ... isn't to remove or put padding and cushioning around all the sharp edges and the rough edges but to let them know ... "life can suck *and there is a God.*"

Morgan (1985) develops a plan for pastoral care that addresses the needs of divorcing couples. He focuses on the "how" of ministry with divorcing couples. His observations and conclusions about the healing and reconciling role of communities of faith created lively internal debate as I grappled with participant's comments about the isolation of specialized support groups.

Morgan communicates concern that the church frequently exiles or isolates divorced persons and families. He makes a point of declaring "Christians are to bear burdens *with* divorced persons, not *for* them" (p. 79). He notes distinctive phases of the divorce process for divorcing partners [or families]: pre-divorce, divorce or crisis, and post divorce. The literature reviewed in Chapter One indicates similar phases for children in divorcing families. Hetherington and Wallerstein identify phases of the divorce process for children.

Morgan's emphasis grows out of his personal divorce experience and focuses on ministry to divorcing couples. He proposes that ministry during initial pain, pre-divorce and crisis phases includes: mediating forgiveness with individuals; providing rituals for separating; personal concern from members of the community of faith, especially from one who traveled a similar path; and structured peer support groups for divorcing individuals. Ritual for separation is important because the community of faith participates in wedding rituals and rituals at death. Therefore, it should participate in similar rituals for the relational death which is divorce. Morgan recommends peer support groups last approximately eight weeks (pp. 83-101). According to Morgan:

Divorce support groups may be the best gift the church can offer divorcing people at the point of their initial pain. A divorce group, as a microcosm of the true church, becomes a reconciling and caring community. (p. 102)

After repeatedly reading Morgan's text, I realize he affirms an integrative ministry for divorcing families when he writes: "divorcing Christians should never be segregated from the rest of the congregational life ... and should never be identified as 'different'" (p. 136).

Miller (1992) presents another model, specific to work with adults who experience parental divorce. Following Wallerstein and Beal, Miller acknowledges that resolving parental divorce requires renegotiating basic trust issues to facilitate intimacy formation (pp. 7, 21-79). She states, and I concur:

My theory is that, regardless of an individual's age at the time of parental divorce, the main reason these symptoms persist into adulthood is that the primary foundation of psychological well-being ..., the ability to trust oneself and others, has been fundamentally threatened by the experience of being betrayed by divorcing or divorced parents.... The result is that when many of these children reach adulthood, they are not well equipped to form relationships, whether with another person or through faith in God. (pp. 4-5)

Miller observes that children of divorce report a wide range of emotional responses to parental divorce. As adults, many children of divorce experience a "sleeper effect" of anxiety/fear of betrayal in intimate relationships (pp. 28-30, 102). I interpret the "sleeper effect" as the necessity of reworking and renegotiating transitional adaptation in the context of developmental transition. This construction alters to focus from a crisis response to a transitional process.

Miller grounds her approach in Eriksonian developmental theory and Bowenian systems theory. Her intensive relational approach utilizes the therapeutic relationship between individual careseekers and pastoral counsellor. Additionally, the pastoral functions of ritual within community provide a relational context for Miller's model of care. In the therapeutic relational context "pastoral caregivers ... mediate fundamental trust in God ... through a threefold function of invitation, appeal, and challenge" (p. 282). She explains pastoral caregivers function as "ritual coordinators," "representatives of the numinous, reconcilers, and iconoclasts" (pp. 282-283). Through these functions, pastoral caregivers intervene. Specific invitation rituals she commends include: "baptism [or the renewal of baptismal affirmations], confirmation, and the sign of peace" (pp. 286, 289). As well, caregivers facilitate intimacy formation through informal naming rituals of greeting and identifying individuals by name while confirming them with eye-contact. Further, narrative therapy provides opportunities for individuals to renegotiate and redo the work of risking fundamental trust, the first Eriksonian developmental task (pp. 286-289).

Miller looks at the appeal to risk fundamental trust in the context of Eucharist or what my own tradition often calls the "Lord's Table." Explicit in the narrative, is the theme of

betrayal by Judas. Recognizing and accepting the potential for betrayal without devastation shifts the interpersonal dynamic to self-empowering oneself to risk trust in new relationships with other humans and with God (pp. 292-294). Risking trust, oriented within this context, prepares individuals for the next phase of exploring issues of autonomy vs. shame and doubt (pp. 295-296). This risk of trust includes reconciliation through differentiation, demonstrated in new patterns of intimate relationships. Pastoral caregivers often function as instructors and coaches during much of this process of differentiation (pp. 296-303).

Finally, Miller works with the challenge to risk as a process to facilitate reworking issues of initiative and guilt, Erikson's third developmental phase. Here Miller claims the prophetic function for pastoral caregivers. She adopts Heschel's descriptive term "iconoclast" (p. 304). Heschel (1962) says: "the prophet is an iconoclast, challenging.... [b]eliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity ... exposes as scandalous pretensions" (p. 10). Cherished beliefs to challenge include: idolizing particular love relationships, idolizing expressed as a need to control, idolizing expressed in the refusal to trust, and idolizing through the unwillingness to forgive and to accept forgiveness (Miller, 1992, pp. 305-306). Here the pastoral caregiver challenges to risk and mediates through rituals of penance and forgiveness.

Miller views her model as interconnected and dynamic structural bases through which she operates in pastoral care relationships. They function both as grounding and intervention techniques. Miller's model augments my earlier discussion of theological grounding. She provides enriching insight and interventions for a responsive model of pastoral care.

Elements of a Model of Responsive Pastoral Care

I contend that the impact of divorce creates non-normative stress for normal family transition, as does death. As therapists and pastoral caresharers, we benefit from recognizing that death is normal. Trauma results from losses of parent, spouse, child or friend. Divorce precipitates similar losses, which often remain incomplete. Relationships change dramatically through cut-offs and indifference, yet the people do not die. As Christians and pastoral caresharers, we less often view divorce as "sin." However, members of divorced and divorcing families still experience strong overtones of shame and guilt for not measuring up to some internalized ideal of family. I asked one participant, a 22-year-old male, if he felt divorce is "now normative and ... less traumatic ... because it is more normative?" His response:

Sure, it's more common, just as teenage mothers are more common than they were back in the '50s. I think it may be more acute in some ways when divorce is less common, but that is only as far as the outside. Dealing with it for yourself inside, I think it's probably much the same.

Miller theorizes that fundamental trauma occurs at the core of psychosocial well-being and stimulates mistrust and intimacy problems. Her model suggests a rather narrow focus for pastoral care mediated primarily by professional pastoral caregivers. She assumes confronting and renegotiating shame and doubt mediated through the professional pastoral caregiver/caresseeker relationship facilitates initial healing work. I believe there is a "more excellent way." Responsive care within a community of faith includes and moves beyond the professional ca esharer/caresseeker approach. Oglesby (1990) defines pastoral care which moves beyond the caregiver/caresharer relationship toward a more communal relationship which is healing. He writes:

pastoral care is that function of the people of God wherein we "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2) ...

The bearing of burdens is not something done simply "for" others; rather it is a corporate venture done "with" others.... Every member ... participates ... just as each is the recipient.... It is a process whereby we listen with gentleness and patience, speak with truth and love, hold out a hand in time of loneliness and fear, sit in silence through the long night watches, and rejoice when the shadow of distress is dissolved in the warm sun of deliverance....

... pastoral care is not concerned primarily with producing right knowing or right doing ... there is ... the basic intention of reestablishing broken relationships, of healing the wounds of loneliness and grief, of loving and forgiving in the context of truth and grace.... In the biblical sense triumph comes ... in the transformation of the person in a relationship of love and forgiveness so that s/he is able to deal creatively with any situation ... (pp. 39-41)

There is a double-bind. Healing and reconciliation occur intrapersonally within an interpersonal context. The transitions from woundedness and alienation parallels developmental transitions of individual and communal identity formation. With an emphasis on utilizing unstructured, integrated, intergenerational groups, my proposed model focuses on individuals in life transition within a communal context. As a direct result of this study process, I propose a model that includes relational healing in caring communities and in therapeutic relationships.

### Piece Work Quilts

Sometimes, recalling three pieced quilts portrays my vision that community is healing. When I recall the first quilt, I see my sister wrapped in a quilt pieced in a cross and star pattern, symbols of reconciliation, bordered in bright blue. Scattered in the background, I see small white blocks embroidered with names of people. Those people functioned as my sister's surrogate family when she was very young. By the time my parents divorced, the



quilt was nearly threadbare, but the names were still bright. My sister wrapped herself in that quilt and remembered their care many times as she worked through her distress and grief.

The second quilt, is a lovely pastel quilt pieced in a "Wedding Ring" pattern. I received this quilt as a gift from the Women's Auxiliary of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in 1990-1991. That year, I experienced "the sleeper effect" of anxiety and fear in intimate relationships. I needed to rework my grief about parental abandonment and perceived abandonment within my community of faith. Somehow, the wedding ring pattern became a symbol of hope for me. The gift of the quilt created a new awareness of my acceptance in a wider community of faith.

The third quilt draws me back to my roots in West Virginia and within my conservative, conservationist religious and cultural heritage. Again, this pieced quilt bears images of reconciliation. The diamond shaped pieces are crafted into stars bordered in bright red and white. To me, the solid colors, red and white, speak of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing. Much of the fabric comes from the printed sugar sacks a former baby sitter used to make play clothes and pajamas for me. Several years after we moved from that community, my friend remembered her promise to piece a quilt for me. This woman provided maternal care for me for several months after my mother miscarried a child. We bonded intensely, so intensely that she remembered and kept her promise, even in the face of her disapproval about my parents divorce. She cared so deeply for me, that she recruited a network of caring friends and acquaintances to deliver the quilt top.

For several years, I stored the quilt top. Then, I asked my mother-in-law to back it and quilt it. She took it and put it away. In 1992, she finished it and gave it to me for my

birthday. Occasionally, I took the quilt out of the cupboard, looked at it and allowed memories to surface -- "this was a favorite nightie," "my sister and I wore matching dresses from this material," and "I wore this when ...." Then I folded the quilt and returned it to the cupboard. I still needed to renegotiate trust issues, shame and autonomy issues and perhaps even guilt and initiative issues, before I used it regularly.

Early this fall, I talked about my experience of parental divorce and my work on my thesis with several coworkers. As we talked, I told them about the third quilt. In that communal encounter, I experienced the reality that community is healing, in the present for past and future. These women listened, empathized, expressed caring concern and encouraged as I remembered my pain and re-storied. Individually and communally, these women challenged me to consider the piece work quilt as a metaphor for my thesis and responsive pastoral care.

How do I translate this into a model for responsive pastoral care? I review my definition of responsiveness: a willingness to listen actively and creatively; a willingness to respect doubt and confusion; a refusal to participate in power abuses within the communal relationships; an ability to communicate empathy and concern; and, a willingness to be appropriately vulnerable to facilitate the process of working through painful issues in the context of communal relationships. A few years ago, I encountered a useful outline for depicting and conceptualizing change.<sup>2</sup> The model, described below, serves as map and

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<sup>2</sup>In 1992, Jozef Denys used this acronym in didactic sessions for an SPE Unit at Freeport Health Care Village. My notes record his words as "choice, action, reflection and evaluation."

intervention for responsive pastoral care. It arises from a Hegelian dialectic of action and reflection for mediating alienation through reconciliation (Baum, 1975, pp. 6-12).

### CARE

First, communities of faith (churches) need nurture and education to equip them to function responsively. A few years ago, I wrote a reflective paper that sketches my theoretical and philosophical foundation for the educational ministry of the church. I concluded that paper writing:

Much of what I have written can be summarized as the task of "equipping the saints" for the pilgrimage of faith and for reconciliation. What is continually necessary for me as an individual of faith and a member of my faith community is an ongoing process of CARE.

C - all;  
A - wareness;  
R - efection/response/reconciliation; and,  
E - valuation

Do I believe God's call changes for me? Not really. What changes is my understanding of the call, my changed awareness and understanding of the needs embraced in that call, my response to God's love working in me that motivates me to work for justice and reconciliation, and my thoughtful and prayerful evaluation of my efforts, which in turn redefines my understanding of God's call to me.

Here is the very essence of responsive pastoral care. In practical terms, a Christian community active in this process will function within a dynamic cycle of defining the present call for that particular community. The educative process includes issuing both invitation and challenge for communities of faith to address human transitional issues as part of their attempt to discern a present calling. As well, invitation and call serve as a stimulus to awareness of the human needs where God calls the communities to be in ministry. Part of this awareness and sensitivity to human need must, for me grow out of an understanding of

our human need to renegotiate developmental phases within communal relationships of healing and reconciliation. This describes the awareness which I believe comprises a fundamental part of the cycle of CARE.

Another integral component of the dynamic cycle is that of reflection/response/reconciliation. Donald Miller (1987/1991) articulates my concept of reflection/response/reconciliation when he describes Christian education as *shalom*. He writes:

... the biblical concept of shalom is much more dynamic, active, outgoing, and energizing. Shalom is a fullness and completeness in which one and all feel the depth of life within ongoing activity. Shalom overcomes the powers by which life tears itself apart. Shalom is to live life richly, to have one's place in nature, to be related to a community and a community of communities, to experience life as God intends it. (p. 81)

The "piece work quilts" I described graphically demonstrate this reflection/response/reconciliation communal experience of healing community for me.

Finally, in the cycle of CARE, comes evaluation. Evaluation encompasses reviewing and re-storying, which moves toward renegotiating the cycle. Each of these stages is both independent and interdependent within responsive pastoral care. Evaluation often occurs in the context of remembering and re-storying. The dynamic process of responsive pastoral care requires fostering within community a "context for remembering" and "re-membering" (Patton, 1993, pp. 27-36).

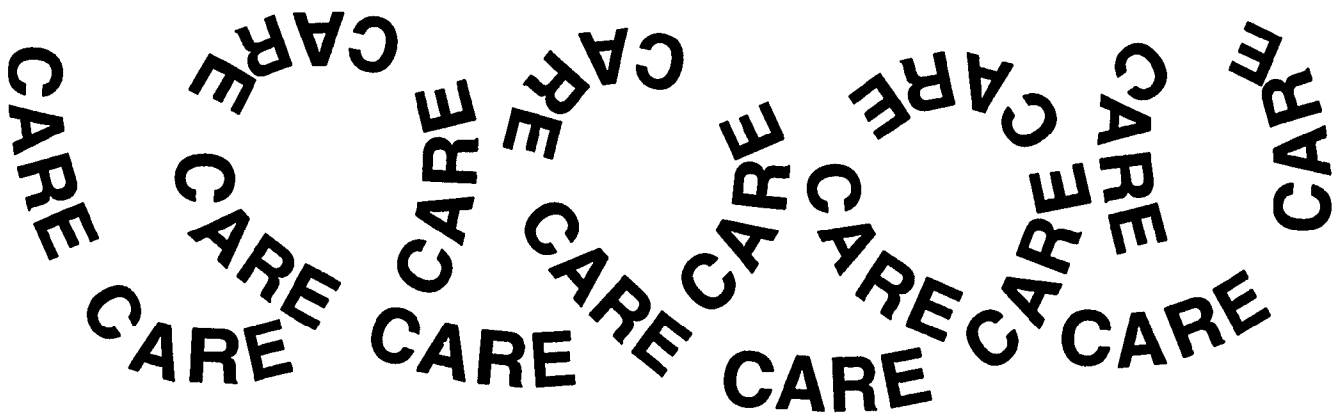
### Slinky

Frequently, I modify the words I use in the acrostic for CARE. Most often, I adopt forms of "choosing, acting, reflecting, and evaluating." I use this construct, envisioning a dynamic cycle. This cycle reminds me of the coil-spring toy we played with as children

called a "Slinky." Creative individuals demonstrate the dynamism of the coil by making the spring propel itself down the steps. Intensely creative people make the "Slinky" return up the stairs. Within the cycle of CARE, the dynamic movement may move in either or both directions to facilitate healing. This is similar to Miller's proposed theory of needing to rework developmental phases in the wake of traumatic experiences.

In clinical work, I demonstrate the cycle of CARE with a rainbow slinky. Both the movement and the colors represent change. Change can be rapid or almost imperceptible, as in the blending of colors. Utilizing this reflective process facilitates *responsive* change in caresharing.

**Figure 2: Slinky Model of a Dynamic Cycle of CARE**



Communities or caresharers utilizing the "Slinky" model find some balance or creative tension between cognitive behavioral group models (such as "Rainbows," "Banana Splits," and structured peer support groups) and relational and educative models. Page & Berkow (1994) in their reconceptualization of group theory precipitated a profound shift as I worked to develop a model for responsive pastoral care. They suggest that groups provide helpful settings for individuals to confront and engage others relationally. They describe the healing process, relating healing to the dynamics of interrelationship. Here, they incorporate into group theory ontological terms of love, power and justice. They comment:

The movement of individuals toward healing and growth always involves awareness and cannot occur if individuals choose to avoid freedom and responsibility. The activity of being aware in organizing perceptions is the basis of the dynamics through which interactions are structured in an unstructured therapy process. (pp. 3-4)

Further:

The core ontological elements of love, power, and justice are useful as constructs that can help explain how individuals' world views are integrated with a process of relationship, and vice versa. In principle, the integration of love, power, and justice indicates how group members can operate without interfering with one another. If love, power, and justice are operating in disharmony in a group, its members are likely to interfere with one another's integrity, possibly by being judgmental or by selectively disengaging....

Disharmony between love, power, and justice within an individual's perceptual field can lead to barriers in awareness such as denial, repression, and compartmentalization. If the ontological elements are united, an individual's perceptual field will function as an integrated whole, and all aspects of experience will be accessible to awareness. Thus, an individual's willingness to be aware can influence patterns of love, power, and justice in a way that increases integration in perception and relationship. Similarly, if an integrated dynamic of love, power, and justice is present in a group or relationship, participants are encouraged to accept and exercise their potential to be aware. (pp. 6-7)

Therefore, communities of faith may form "unstructured" groups based on mutual discovery of ways to maintain creative tension among love, power and justice, rather than specialized groups. Instead of groups developed for "target populations" isolating specific problems or pathology, communities of faith offering responsive pastoral care may opt for integrated groups which share and discover mutual wisdom to negotiate life transitions. Integrated groups incorporating intergenerational members facilitate and foster surrogate family relationships. These surrogate experiences fulfill family needs as family members encounter diminished capacity to fulfill their roles. As well, they empower re-storying by reframing painful experience. The community is healing when its members actively engage in providing supportive networks for trampolines.

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<sup>3</sup>McGuire, D. & Rambo, R. "Wounded Soldier" ©1983 Kingdom Music. In *The Steve Green songbook*. ©1984 Birdwing Music/Cherry Lane Music Publishing Co., Inc., pp. 23-26

As a pastoral caresharer, I work with careseekers to discover, develop and define their options and resources for transformation and growth. It is a process of transformation, growth, and shared pilgrimage of faith. Individuals rework identity formation in the context of healthy shame with renewed awareness of personal, parental and communal finitude (Scott, 1992, pp. 22, 30). Reworking identity formation occurs where community is healing and in the context of therapeutic relationships with pastoral counsellors. An essential part of the process includes penance and forgiveness mediated in affirmations, "sharing the peace," and "blessings." Frequently, I utilize pastoral benedictions or blessings with clients struggling to rework identity formation and issues of trust and intimacy following betrayal.

My proposed model is an integrative/eclectic model. The image of a piece work quilt is an apt metaphor for responsive pastoral care. Responsive pastoral care involves a dynamic relational process, inviting -- and allowing -- movement grounded in communal care. A piece work quilt, a trampoline, a simple acrostic and a child's "slinky" toy provide metaphors and maps for responsive interventions. The model is a relational process. As discussed in the Conclusion, the model requires further research and testing for refinement.



## CONCLUSION

This study began with an assumption that pastoral care for children of divorced or divorcing families requires structured groups working with specific issues. I believe in the importance of normalizing responses for children of divorce. The emotions and issues they confront in their experience of parental divorce are "normal."

During preparation and research, I talked with many people. Several expressed a sense of "*aha!*" and shared experience when I recounted Wallerstein's conclusions. Often, people lamented their lack of knowledge about persistent "survivor" issues. These responses support the validity of structured groups with target populations. I want to honor, not discount, that powerful insight.

However, I also want to be sensitive to the thoughtful, vulnerable expressions of those who participated in the interview process. Respondents affirmed that they wanted and *needed* integration and acceptance for healing. Participants expressed concern that isolating and pathologizing magnified the issues and provided an "easy out" for escaping appropriate responsibility in their lives (see p. 25).

As one who shares this pilgrimage of healing the wounds of family divorce with my respondents, I experience a similar dynamic conflict. As pastoral caresharer, I am intensely aware that similarities exist in process for all who suffer losses. The responsive model of care proposed in Chapter Four reflects my journey toward healing in community. The study stimulates an awareness that responsive pastoral care creates space for flexibility with structured and unstructured groups to meet individual adaptational patterns.

Another dimension of responsive pastoral care is the opportunity for caresharers to encourage children of divorced/divorcing families to reflect on their healing process. The caresharer nurtures the development of dynamic relational patterns. Caresharers challenge beliefs that adult children of divorce follow scripts for failure in intimate relationships.

The study and reflective process for this thesis invited me to renegotiate and reframe my experience of family divorce where my process paralleled those with whom I interacted. The study process augmented my awareness for the need of mutual caresharing within a community of faith.

My participation in this research project enhanced my awareness of the complexity of clinical research in pastoral care. At times I experienced awe in the presence of people's willingness to share their experiences and insight. Simultaneously, I sensed my responsibility to maintain respectful care as I analyzed their responses and reported my conclusions. I gained greater understanding of the need for clearer delimitations within research.

The implications for future research, noted below, challenge me to continue to work with this developing model for pastoral care. As I worked to conceptualize the model, I utilized the approach in clinical practice with individuals and couples. In several instances, utilizing this model fostered relational healing in the therapeutic process.

### **Implications**

This pilot study raises questions for future research and reflection. Do the participant responses reflect issues for a wider population? In this era of cut-backs and redefining of service, how do communities of faith within their framework of financial and human resources meet the perceived need for unstructured, integrated groups?

Future research should explore qualitative response from individuals who participate in counselling relationships and groups grounded in a responsive model for pastoral care. Future research should include a longer-term component with multiple interviews and a quantitative component for study with a broader sample base. Future study should address additional variables such as age, gender, family background and adaptive styles. The import of therapeutic relationships, relationships with research team and research method is an important variable for consideration. The sample should include several subgroups. Some subgroup suggestions: individuals from pastoral families, individuals from leadership families, individuals from families whose adaptation drew them into a formal faith community.

**APPENDIX A****Research Procedure and Design**

This qualitative study is based on interviews with 10 - 12 individuals. Participants are adults whose parents divorced at least 5 years ago. The participants will be selected for equal gender representation. The interviews will be based on a semi-standardized series of open-ended questions. The responses will be audiotaped, transcribed and submitted to the participants for review and editing. Transcriptions will not include identifying information for participants or for third parties, whether individuals or organizations. Following review, the data will be coded for analysis. Since participants will be equally distributed among genders, the question of gender difference in experience will be included in data analysis. At the conclusion of the project, audiotapes will be erased or destroyed. In case of possible publication of findings, coded transcripts which include no means of identification will be retained by me for safekeeping.

Primary ethical implications are: obtaining informed consent from participants, providing safeguards that ensure confidentiality, and encouraging participants to plan for self-care since the questions may trigger a need for them to re-work issues. Careful attention to these implications is consistent with pastoral care and integrity for me. These concerns are addressed both in the letter to participants and in the detailed enumeration of the consent form participants are requested to sign.

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

1. *What is the aim of the study?* The aim of this study, conducted under the auspices of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and supervision of Dr. Peter VanKatwyk, is to explore the role of the church (community of faith) and spiritual resources for healing with adults whose parents have divorced. I hope to learn how the church and spiritual resources have facilitated or hindered individuals in their process of coping with personal responses to parental separation and divorce. The ultimate aim is to envision and describe a responsive model for pastoral care that promotes healing for individuals within a community of faith and/or develop a model of evaluation for pastoral care.
2. *How was I chosen?* I will interview 10-12 individuals, preferably with an equal distribution by gender. These individuals are to be recruited from the Kitchener/Waterloo area by referral or through requests to the student population of Wilfrid Laurier University.
3. *What will be involved in participating?* There will be a 1-2 hour audiotaped interview. The interview will be transcribed. After transcription, the participant will be invited to review and edit the transcript. At that time the participants will also be invited to comment on changes in their perspective arising from the initial interview.
4. *Who will know what I say?* Only the interviewer, Betty Joanne Scott and the Advisor, Dr. Peter VanKatwyk will have access to the tapes and transcriptions. Research Consultant, Thomas St. James O'Connor may be consulted for codifying data. His access will be limited to partial transcriptions which do not include identifying information for the respondent or any other parties discussed.
5. *What risks and benefits are associated with participation?* The possible breach of confidentiality is one foreseeable risk to you. To preserve confidentiality, your name will not appear in transcripts. Identifying information will be omitted or changed as part of the preparation of any written reports or discussion of the study. Another risk is emotions which arise when recalling painful memories. As a participant, you are encouraged to have in mind an individual or counsellor you will consult should the interview process trigger a need to re-work issues. At any point in the process, you may decline to answer questions, to request time for processing emotions, or to terminate the interview.
6. *What are my rights as a participant?* At any point in the process, you may inquire about the research. Your questions will be answered fully. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or to decline to answer specific questions. At the conclusion of the study, participants will be provided with a summary of the results of the research upon request.
7. *Where can I obtain further information about the study?* The study is conducted by Betty Joanne Scott under the auspices of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary with the advice of Dr. Peter VanKatwyk, Director of Pastoral Counselling Programs. Dr. VanKatwyk can be contacted at (519) 884-1970. Betty Joanne may be contacted at (519) 744-2877.

I hereby agree to participate in the study as described above:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Betty Joanne Scott

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant, Date \_\_\_\_\_

**BETTY JOANNE SCOTT**

51 Paulander Drive Unit 83  
KITCHENER, ONTARIO  
N2M 5E5

519-744-2877

Dear

As part of the requirements for an M. Th. in Pastoral Counselling through Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, at Wilfrid Laurier University, I am conducting a study to explore the role of the church (community of faith) and spiritual resources for healing with adults who have experienced parental divorce. I am writing to invite your participation in this study.

The study will be conducted under the auspices of the seminary and the supervision of Dr. Peter VanKatwyk. I hope to learn how the church and spiritual resources have facilitated or hindered individuals in their process of coping with personal responses to parental separation and divorce. The aim is to envision and describe a responsive model for pastoral care that promotes healing for individuals within a community of faith and/or develop a model of evaluation for pastoral care.

Participation involves a 1-2 hour audiotaped interview. The tape will be transcribed without identifying information for you or for any individuals or organizations mentioned. You will be invited to review and edit the transcript. At the conclusion of the project, audiotapes will be erased or destroyed. In case of possible publication of findings, coded transcripts which include no means of identification will be retained by me in safekeeping. Participation is voluntary. At any point in the process, you may inquire about the research. Your questions will be answered fully. Before the interview begins, you receive a consent form describing the study and your participation. You may request clarification on any point before signing. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Throughout the process, you may decline to answer questions, to request time for processing emotions, or to terminate the interview.

Participants will be provided with a summary of the results of the research upon request.

As a participant, you are encouraged to be aware that powerful emotions may arise when recalling painful memories. Therefore, you are encouraged to have in mind an individual or counsellor you will consult should the interview process trigger a need to re-work issues. You will find enclosed with this letter proposed interview questions. You are invited to preview the questions and to suggest modifications.

I will be phoning you within the next week to request your participation and arrange for an interview at our mutual convenience. I invite you to contact me with any questions you may have in the interim.

Sincerely,

Betty Joanne Scott

**APPENDIX C**  
**Interview Questions**

Demographic Information:

- . Date \_\_\_\_\_
  - . Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
  - . Age \_\_\_\_\_
  - . Marital status \_\_\_\_\_
  - . Educational background \_\_\_\_\_
  - . Religious preference \_\_\_\_\_
  - . Age at time of parental separation/divorce \_\_\_\_\_
1. What resources did you have to help you cope at the time of your parents' divorce?
  2. How did these resources help you?
  3. How did they hinder your process?
  4. How was your faith community for you at that time? How did your faith help you deal with the issues of divorce then? How did it hinder?
  5. How does your faith help you to deal with issues related to divorce at this time in your life?
  6. Looking back, how would you describe the impact of your parents' divorce on your life?
  7. How do you think your parents' divorce impacts your intimate relationships? How does it affect your partner? Your children? Your interrelationships?
  8. Looking back on your experience, what would you want your faith community to have done, or to have done differently, to help you as you dealt with the issues related to your parents' divorce?
  9. Are you aware of ongoing issues that you deal with? How would you like your faith community to help you deal with them?
  10. What kind of image describes your experience of coping with your parents' divorce? In your image, is your faith community represented, if at all?

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