

EXPERIENCING AND EXPRESSING SHALOM AS SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Ministry

Advisor: Michael Christensen, Ph.D.

Steven R. Neal
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey
May 2016

Copyright © 2015 Steven R. Neal

All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

EXPERIENCING AND EXPRESSING SHALOM AS SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Steve R. Neal

First Baptist Church of Turner, Kansas City

This project attempts the development and implementation of a spiritual formation process which facilitates the experiencing and expressing of shalom. If successful, this process will be made available to First Baptist Church of Turner, in Kansas City, Kansas, as a means of integrating spiritual formation and congregational growth and community development.

The project is made up of three phases. Phase one is the development of a three session spiritual formation exercise titled, “Experiencing and Expressing Shalom.” In phase two, the Lay Advisory Committee is guided through the three sessions. The major component in each of these exercises is a “Shalom Safari” in which the participants go to a place in the Turner community in search of shalom. They are encouraged to utilize all of their senses to experience shalom. In the third phase, the process is evaluated for its viability and potential use at First Baptist Church of Turner.

This project is developed on the panentheistic premise of a primordial spark of Divinity within all things that draws all of creation toward shalom. Both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are used to offer a biblical and theological foundation for the relevancy of shalom. In considering shalom as primordial, experiential, and expressive, this project also re-imagines both sin and salvation as they relate to shalom as being spiritually formative.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	v
EPIGRAPH	vi
CHAPTER 1. NARRATIVE OF CONCERN: A DIVIDED CHRISTIANITY	1
CHAPTER 2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION	9
CHAPTER 3. PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	20
CHAPTER 4. THE PROJECT	31
CHAPTER 5. CHANGES THAT OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT	40
CHAPTER 6. REFLECTIONS.....	49
CHAPTER 7. APPLICATIONS OF LEARNINGS	60
APPENDIX.....	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY	159

To my wife, Laurel Ann Neal

Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we see and do.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

CHAPTER 1

NARRATIVE OF CONCERN: A DIVIDED CHRISTIANITY

For over 100 years, Christians in the United States have been living in an era of great transition—a time of massive change and new awakenings that have transformed us intellectually, socially and spiritually. Advances in science and technology, major shifts in Christian thought and theology, and a rapid cultural drift toward a postmodern worldview have all contributed to a shaking of the foundation of Christianity in America. Granting that nuances and ambiguities exist in theological and doctrinal positions and movements, and at the risk of oversimplifying such positions and movements, it is my belief that the “Christian Century” is over and Christendom in the United States is divided.

In 1900, the so-called “Christian Century” began with Liberal Protestant optimism followed closely by the Fundamentalist—Modernist debate in the 1920’s and 1930’s. By the mid to late century society and religion shifted from modernism to post-modernism culminating in our present Traditionalist—Emergent Church divide. Consequently, in the 21st century, Traditional Christianity in the United States finds itself struggling and declining, Emergent Christianity finds itself questioning yet growing, and Christianity in general finds itself as a house divided.

In this paper I begin with a general historical overview of Christianity in the United States from Fundamentalism to present-day Emergent Christianity. I present a biblical and theological foundation by developing a working definition of the rich Hebrew word shalom and its theological ramifications as they are presented in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. I describe my project design and methodology, and present the results of the project. I reflect on what change took place and what personal

transformation occurred as a result of the project. I reflect further on what I learned about myself, my ministry, and my ministry context. Lastly, I offer reflections, insights, and lessons from what I have learned, how they can be applied to my practice of ministry in general and how others can benefit from doing what I did.

The Fundamentalist and the Modernist

Beginning in the early twentieth century, so-called Christian modernists began to question and reject traditional views of the Christian faith.

¹ As science and technology advanced, religious leaders such as Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Northern Baptist pastor, and others began to explore and redefine fundamentals of the Christian faith as they related to these new advances. Conservative elements of Protestantism in America reacted to what they perceived to be heresy and an abandonment of the faith, and offered their response with the development of “The Fundamentals of the Christian Faith.”² These writings insinuated that the stated fundamentals had to be adhered to in order for a person or church to be authentically Christian.

While fundamentalism flourished, other Protestant denominations and groups became more engaged in the latest and more liberal schools of biblical hermeneutics. They also became much more ecumenical in mission, as well as more socially oriented in their ministry and outreach. In 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick delivered his famous sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?”³ in which he highlighted the differences between the fundamentalist and liberal views.

Christian Fundamentalism was built on six basic doctrinal beliefs that were considered essential to Christian identity: 1) the inerrancy of the Bible; 2) the virgin birth and deity of Christ; 3) the

1. The Oxford Dictionary defines modernism as “A movement toward modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas, especially in the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,” http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/modernism, accessed 7-30-14.

2. <http://web.archive.org/web/20030101082327/http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/6528/fundcont.htm>, accessed 6-30-14

3. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/>, accessed 7-30-14.

substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross; 4) the bodily resurrection of Jesus; 5) the validity of Jesus' miracles and 6) the bodily, pre-millennial second coming of Christ. Secondary beliefs of Fundamentalists included Moses as the author of the first five books of the Bible and the pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

Fosdick's point was not as much a rejection of fundamentalist doctrines (although he obviously did not adhere to them), but rather, it was a repudiation of the Fundamentalists' declaration of who was and who wasn't truly Christian. Fosdick and other liberals stood with and for those who defined themselves as Christians but who did not adhere to the Fundamentalist positions.⁴

Postmodernism and the Emergent Church

I'm defining postmodernism as a rejection of the assumptive certainties of modernism. It is an intentional intellectual and spiritual distancing from the modernist view of reason and science as reliable and true. The postmodernist would say there is no way to determine universal truth—that truth is only as “true” as the community's best attempt to understand it. Stanley Grenz defines postmodernism as “a community-based understanding of truth.” He sees the postmodern worldview as affirming “whatever [the community] accept[s] as truth” and as envisioning truth as “dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically,” Grenz writes, “the postmodern worldview affirms that this relativity extends beyond our perceptions of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, truth is relative to the community in which we participate.”⁵

Tony Jones, in *The New Christians*, offers a historical overview of the beginnings of the emergent Christianity movement.

In the mid 1990's. Jack Caputo hosted a conference at Villanova University on postmodern philosophy featuring the imitable Jacques Derrida, as well as others. Caputo heard that an evangelical pastor from Texas was in the crowd, along with some of his young charges. “If

4. For a more in-depth history, see LaTourette, Kenneth Scott, *A History of Christianity, Volume 2, Reformation to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 1418-1425.

5. Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 2-8.

Brad Cecil is here, I'd like to meet him. Please come and see me," Caputo said from the stage. Brad, a volunteer pastor of young adults at the conservative megachurch Pantego Bible, had been reading Derrida and Richard Rorty and other postmodern philosophers for a couple of years, and hearing of the conference, he new he couldn't miss it. Caputo, for his part, couldn't understand what a Texas evangelical was doing at an academic conference featuring Derrida, who could, in Derrida's own words, "rightly pass for an atheist."⁶ Other developing leaders of the emergent movement included Tim Conder, a youth pastor from North Carolina; megachurch youth pastor, Doug Pagitt; Karen Ward, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church headquarters in Chicago; Tim Keel, a seminary student at Denver Seminary and present pastor of The Well in Kansas City, Missouri; church planter Andrew Jones, from Portland, Oregon; Mark Driscoll in Seattle; and others.⁷

By 1997, many of these blossoming postmodern leaders had begun to consider the state of the Church in the United States. They began to examine postmodernism and its effect on the practice of faith in America, as well as question the relevancy of traditional church programs and processes. They, and others, began experimenting with new ways to do ministry while also exploring and developing new theological theories from a postmodern perspective. By this time, Doug Pagitt was heading up the Leadership Network in Dallas, Texas. It was Pagitt and the Leadership Network that hosted one of the first emergent gatherings, "GenX 1.0" in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was at this gathering that Brad Cecil offered a presentation that in time evolved into what is the now legendary power point that became the seminal beginnings of the emergent church movement.

In the power point presentation, Cecil said postmodernity is "not a life stage" and "not a generational issue exclusive to Gen X and millennials," but is as primarily a shift in epistemology—the way people process information and view the world." According to Cecil, the new self, or individual, moves from being defined as an object built up through cumulative effort to a present oriented self, realized, discovered, and actualized in a continual process." Cecil said,

6. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossy-Bass, 2008), 41.

7. *Ibid.*, 41-42.

The [postmodern] concept does not allow the individual to exist prior to community. Individuals can only be who they are by virtue of the role they fill and the ongoing tradition of those roles. Community is not collection of similar individuals; it is rather, individuals who participate in complementary interaction. It is the individual's differences rather than their similarities that enable them to contribute.⁸

It is from this presentation that the emergent church movement got its beginning.

Scot McKnight defines emergent churches as “missional communities emerging in postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus seeking to be faithful to the orthodox Christian faith in their place and time.”⁹ Tony Jones, in his book, *The New Christians*, offers three characteristics of emergent Christians:

First he describes them as Christians “who feel great disappointment with modern American Christianity.”¹⁰ Jones and other emergents see the traditional church, both conservative and mainline, as the problem. They are criticized as closed, impenetrable fortresses that serves to protect those within its walls from those without.¹¹ Jones defines the real problem as foundationalism. He writes, “The ‘liberal’ Christians in America and the ‘conservatives’ suffer from the same illness. Both are beholden to a scheme that philosophers call foundationalism.” Jones defines foundationalism as the “the theory that at the bottom of all human knowledge is a set of self-inferential or internally justified beliefs; in other words, the foundation is indubitable and requires no external justification.”¹²

There is some validity to such criticism, and there are those who claim that the answer to this quandary is to abandon the traditional church completely. They speak of the emergent frontier as being outside the walls of the church and far away from its influence and traditions.

8. <http://www.slideshare.net/knightopia/ministry-in-the-emerging-postmodern-world>, accessed October 6, 2015.

9. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 28.

10. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 70.

11. Social media and classroom conversations.

12. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 18-19.

Jones also describes emergent Christians as having a “high...desire for inclusion.”¹³ Openness to others—their spiritual journey, their statements of beliefs—is a byproduct of the postmodernist’s refusal to claim their ability to know or proclaim ultimate truth. A common practice in emergent discussions on social media is to offer the acrostic caveat BICBW (but I could be wrong) as a means of practicing inclusion rather than certainty.

Lastly, Jones defines emergents as having “a hope-filled orientation.” Emergents generally reject the fundamentalist view of end times disasters and destruction. He writes, “In an emergent church, you’re likely to hear a phrase like ‘Our calling as a church is to partner with God in the work that God is already doing in the world...’”¹⁴ Or, as Tony Campolo says, “Find out what God is doing in the world and join it.” Emergents are adamant that Jesus brought good news and offers liberation and restoration, rather than punishment and destruction.

The Emergent Frontier

Unfortunately, in the epilogue of his book Jones refers to emergent Christians as feral. He portrays them as “pushing over fences and roaming around the margins of the church in America.”¹⁵ His reference to emergent Christians as “once domesticated in conventional churches and traditional seminaries”¹⁶ seems divisive and exclusive. “They occasionally wander back,” Jones writes, “feeding off the structures and theologies of traditional Christianity, but they never stick around. Attempts to re-domesticate them will fail.”¹⁷

13. Ibid.,71.

14. Ibid., 72.

15. Ibid., 219.

16. Ibid., 220.

17. Ibid.

This seems to be a rather negative viewpoint. It is my belief that the emergent frontier—although easily found outside the walls of the traditional church—is also the place where the traditional and the emergent church meet. The emergent frontier can also pass through the traditional church, not just outside of it. In other words, to see the emergent frontier—the rejection of foundationalism, the struggle with the idea of no absolute truth, the very tenets of emergent Christianity—to see these things as only outside and away from the traditional or mainline church, ignores the reality of an emergent Christianity that is also developing within the traditional Christianity.

Pushing over fences and roaming around the margins can be as destructive and dangerous as a closed, guarded fortress mentality. The answer lies not in abandoning the fortress, but rather in transforming it into a sanctuary. Emergent Christianity can also occur within the walls of the traditional church and can emerge as expressive ministry into the community through walls that are solid when needed for protection, but permeable when the need exists for a way in—when sanctuary and inclusion is crucial.

Being on the frontier of an emergent Christianity means searching for creative ways for believers to bring themselves into increasingly new and relevant ministry and outreach that works well within our context. However, such endeavors must be grounded in something deeper than just emergent or traditional values and processes. The transforming work of the church on the emergent frontier must be rooted in spiritual disciplines and practices that foster emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing, wholeness, health, and completeness—which is what is meant by shalom.

A church, whether traditional, emergent, or a hybrid of both, does its best ministry when grounded in disciplines and practices that facilitate an experiential and expressive connection with God. My postmodern project is to reimagine or reconstruct the traditional process of spiritual formation in a new context—the emergent church as defined above—by employing the ancient concept of shalom.

Conclusion

During this time of change and upheaval, something is needed that grounds the Church, both emergent and traditional, in an experiential and expressive spirituality; something that can counter the present postmodern drift with a spiritual formation process that bridges the divide between the Emergent and Traditionalist. Such a process must keep three premises in mind:

First: although some emergents suggest the emergent frontier is found only outside the traditional church, in reality, the emergent frontier also runs through the traditional church. Those things defined as emergent by Tony Jones, Scot McKnight and others, are found within the traditional church as well as outside it.

Second: it is through a continuing process of spiritual formation and disciplines that a vibrant and transformational Christianity thrives, regardless of its emergent or traditional bent.

Third: the ancient Hebrew concept of *shalom* is something that can be tangibly “felt and felt” (as a previous generation said it) and therefore is conducive to the practice of experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation.

Therefore, my project explores the potential of a personal and corporate spiritual formation process which avoids the Traditionalist—Emergent divide by integrating traditional practices of spiritual formation, best practices for congregational growth, and asset based community development through experiencing and expressing the biblical presence of shalom in all its fullness.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Internationally renowned Buddhist monk and Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, in his book *Peace is Every Step*, says, “Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we do and see. The question is whether or not we are in touch with it.” He writes, “We don’t have to travel far away to enjoy the blue sky. We don’t have to leave our city or even our neighborhood to enjoy the eyes of a beautiful child. Even the air we breathe can be a source of joy.” He continues, “every breathe we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.”¹ I find this a beautiful representation of shalom (or shanti for Buddhists), and is essentially what I am trying to discover and develop in this project what I am trying to discover and develop in this project.

In this chapter, I begin with a rich notion, and for me an essential premise that there is *a primordial spark of Divinity within all things that draws all of creation toward shalom*. I then explore both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures to build a biblical and theological foundation for the relevancy of shalom, followed by a definition of shalom. I also re-imagine or re-envision the doctrines of sin and salvation as they relate to shalom. Finally, I develop the concept of the praxis of shalom.

A Primordial Spark of Divinity within All Things

“There is that of God in every person,” says the Quaker²; there is that of God in everything, says the mystic. St. Athanasius said, “God became man so that men might become gods.” The

1. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (Bantam Books: New York, 1991), 5.

2. Commonly attributed to Quaker, George Fox. A foundational theological proposition among Quakers.

Orthodox Church defines this as *theosis*, the belief that humanity participates in the divine nature of God. Jewish mysticism speaks of *tikkun olam*, “repairing the world”, pointing to humanity’s participation in the divine process of healing and wholeness in the world.

The mythic story known as “The Shattering of the Vessels,” illustrates the premise that there exists a spark of divinity in every person and in everything. It comes from the 16th century Jewish mystic, Rabbi Isaac Luria of Safed, who relates how in the beginning, God breathed in and created darkness. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and ten holy vessels came into existence, each filled with light.

In the myth, the vessels shattered and the light was scattered throughout all creation. According to its teaching, we are created to “gather the sparks, no matter where they are hidden...It should be the aim of everyone to raise these sparks from wherever they are imprisoned and to elevate them to holiness by the power of their soul.”³

Christian mysticism would place that spark not only throughout external creation, but also within each created being. As Gregory of Nyssa is quoted as saying, “When one considers the universe, can anyone be so simple minded as not to believe that the divine is present in everything, pervading, embracing and penetrating it? For all things depend on [the God] who is and nothing can exist which does not have its being in [the God] who is.”

Contemporary mystic, Matthew Fox, writes, “Like fish in water and the water in the fish, creation is in God and God is in creation.”⁴ This suggestion of a primordial spark can be called panentheistic—God is “in” all things and all things are “in” God (in contrast to pantheistic, which means God is everything and everything is God). Trinitarian theologian, Molly Marshall explains how “God is inextricably related to the world.” She refers to a “vision of panentheism—no bifurcation

3. <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/how-the-ari-created-a-myth-and-transformed-judaism>, accessed 4-21-14.

4. Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 57.

between God and the world...” and states “God *is* in the world, and the world is in God.”⁵ She refers to Jurgen Moltmann’s book, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, by stating that “Moltmann [does] not confine [his] description of God’s presence to its indwelling of human beings,” but rather as “the creative power of God in all created beings.”⁶ What this means is that this primordial, innate spark of divinity or spirituality exists within every created thing, and this spark draws creation toward shalom.

Shalom in Scripture

In the Hebrew Bible, in Genesis Chapter One, we read *implicitly* about shalom in all its fullness: In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the chaotic deep, and hovers now - emanating, vibrating, and resonating the very Source of Life - over, in, and through all created things. The first words in the book of Genesis tell us, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It tells us how “the earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.”⁷ The second chapter of Genesis contains a second creation story of how God formed humanity “from the dust of the ground,” by breathing “the breath of life into the [human being’s] nostrils and that [human being becoming] a living person,” having received the very life-giving Spirit of God.

In the book of Jeremiah, chapter 29,⁸ we read *explicitly* about the practice of shalom:

Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who and been exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar... He sent the letter with Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiyah when they went to Babylon as King Zedekiah’s ambassadors to Nebuchadnezzar. This is what Jeremiah’s letter said: This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says to the all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem “Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! **And work for the peace** [shalom—

5. Molly T. Marshall, *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Spirit* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), 11.

6. *Ibid.*, 23.

7. Genesis 1:1, New Living Translation.

8. Jeremiah 29:1-7, New Living Translation.

completeness, wholeness, health, prosperity] of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its *welfare* [or shalom] will determine your *welfare*.

In Christian Scripture, in the book of Romans, Paul tells us, “All creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who [God’s] children really are.” The goes on to state that “creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. It tells us that “all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”⁹

In the Book of Acts, we read that it is in God that “we live and move and exist.”¹⁰

These expressions, emanations, vibrations, and resonations are the very life giving Breath of God—the very Spirit of God—in whom we have our being. They are the very essence of all the goodness, wholeness and health God intends for creation. They are, that, which in Hebrew Scripture, is called shalom.

Shalom Defined

Shalom is defined as completeness, wholeness, health, and all that is defined as wholly good. Practical theologian, Robert Linthicum says “at its fullest, shalom captures the Hebrew vision of human society, the non-human world, and even the environment in an *integrated whole...*” (italics mine). He continues by defining shalom as “the theology of hope of Israel and the early church, [and] its vision of what the world someday will be.”¹¹ Allison Stokes, in her book *Shalom, Salaam, Peace*, describes shalom as “oneness, or right relationship, between the Lord, creation, and humanity.”¹² Her book illustrates this common definition as it exists among Jews, Muslims, and Christians. In this

9. Romans 8:19, New Living Translation.

10. Acts 17:28, New Living Translation.

11. Robert C. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to transform Their Communities* (Waynesboro: Authentic Media, 2006), 4.

12. Allison Stokes, *Shalom, Salaam, Peace* (New York: United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, 2006), 8.

project, an acrostic developed by Communities of Shalom is used as a practical means of experiencing and expressing shalom.¹³

One of the most beautiful descriptions of shalom is found in Isaiah 65, verses 17 through 23. In this passage, God says, “I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former will not be remembered, nor will it come to mind.” God goes on to say, “rejoice and be glad forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.” God says, “I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”

“Never again,” God says, “will there be an infant who lives but for a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune, for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.”¹⁴

Jerusalem, in this passage, and throughout scripture, is much more than just a city. Jerusalem represents God’s vision for all of creation.

We humans are created for a life of spiritual progression and formation. We are created to experience and express shalom. There seems to be in most religions the idea of a primal attraction to completeness, wholeness, and health. Though there may not be a specific word to define it, and though expressed in various ways, there seems to be a universal search for shalom.

Re-imagining Sin and Salvation

13. See page 29 of thesis.

14: Isaiah 65:20-23, New Living Translation.

To better understand this universal search, it helps to re-visit and re-imagine our understanding of sin and salvation in the light of shalom and from a universal perspective. In doing so, we can grasp more fully the dilemma of creation, its sin and disorder, the effects, and its process of salvation. We can also consider the possibility of a more holistic salvation, which as Linthicum states, “redeems more than people.” The ramifications of sin must be seen as more than just the disconnect and death of the human body and spirit. Sin is an unavoidable condition that affects not only the individual human, but also corrupts community and embeds itself into the very systems of society and all of creation. Even the spiritual realm is tainted with the unavoidable condition of sin.

Consequently, for there to be any hope of completeness, wholeness, and health, salvation must be more than simply the “saving” of the human body and soul from the punishment of hell, and it must include more than just the “saving” of the human body and soul from such punishment into only a spiritual heaven. If creation’s dilemma is the universal condition of sin, then creation’s salvation must be a holistic salvation that redeems and restores all of creation to God’s original intention. Again, Romans 8, verse 22, tells us that all creation groans. In Colossians we read that Jesus, the Christ “is first in everything” and that through him God has “reconciled everything” and has “made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.”¹⁵ This includes each individual human being, human community, the societal systems, all of creation and the spiritual realm.

Even what is probably one of the most quoted and well known verses in Christian scripture—John 3:16—when closely examined, presents a God that loves, and offers restoration and healing not just to humanity, but to the world, the *cosmos*. This Greek word, *cosmos*, in its fullest sense, encompasses all of humanity, its societal structures and systems, and all of creation, including even the universe. The passage tells us that God loved the *cosmos*—everything in creation—so much that God chooses to make a way of redemption and restoration through Jesus Christ. The way of Jesus—what he

15 Colossians 1:18-20, New Living Translation.

taught and how he lived—the way of shalom through love and forgiveness, leads to life. This passage tells us that God didn't send Jesus into the *cosmos* to condemn it, but instead, to save it.¹⁶

This is a dilemma that affects every human being individually and corporately. It affects our societal structures and systems, as well as every living thing and all of creation. The solution to this dilemma is a salvation understood holistically as the restoration to completeness in body, soul, spirit, community and cosmos, offered by God through Jesus Christ. With this biblical and theological foundation, we can begin to explore the praxis of shalom through the experiencing and expressing of shalom.

Shalom as Praxis

Paulo Freire writes of *praxis* as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.” He writes, “One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness.” In other words, oppression becomes a trap. Over time it dulls the senses and lulls those oppressed into an apathetic or acquiescent state. His observation is that “functionally, oppression is domesticating.” Consequently, “to no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can only be done,” Freire writes, “by means of the praxis: *reflection* and *action* upon the world to transform it.”¹⁷

It is in the praxis of shalom—through reflection and through action—through experience and expression—that we can be spiritually formed and transformed. Each encounter with shalom has the potential of being reflective and active, experiential and expressive.

Mark Gornik asks, “What difference would shalom make?” In a culture where unemployment, homelessness, poor education, violence, unaffordable healthcare, corporate greed and other oppressive issues are commonplace, he suggests that shalom in praxis would mean that “weary families would

16. John 3:16-17, New Living Translation.

17. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Continuum: New York, 2003).

find new strength and joy.” It would manifest itself through “every gift [being] appreciated and called into service.” He writes,

Those able to work would have employment that both served the common good and provided a living wage. Miserable housing would be a thing of the past, replaced by homes offering beauty and safety. Vacant land would be turned into gardens filled with flowers and vegetables, reclaimed for local economic development, or designated for affordable housing. Children would attend schools that nurtured the whole person, mind and spirit, enabling them to navigate the world successfully. Streets would be safe, and the innocent would not fear those who protect. No more would the emergency room be a doctor’s office, for quality health services would be personal and available when needed.¹⁸

God’s vision is to de-domesticate the oppressed—to make powerless the lulling and dulling trap of oppression—to make all things new and to make it where oppression is remembered no more. Not only is this God’s vision and God’s work, but the praxis of such a theology—the living out of such a vision—means that it also becomes our vision and our work. As the people of God being transformed through the experience and the expression of shalom, we choose to *reflect* on the world as it is and to *act* on the world as it should be, because of our vision of the world through the transforming power of the Spirit of God brings the fullness of shalom to all of creation, making all things new.

About this universal search for shalom, Shane Claiborne writes, “We long for a space that tips us toward goodness rather than away from it, where we can pick up new habits—holy habits—as we are formed into a new creation, transformed by God.”¹⁹ In our brokenness, we long to be made whole, and in the process of being made whole, we desire to be a part of that process in bringing wholeness to all of creation. The danger lies in the dichotomous relationship between goodness and evil, brokenness and completeness, the world as it is, and the world as it should be. Being broken ourselves, we must constantly be on guard against the dark side of our own souls and spirits which can lead us astray into actions and attitudes that are not transformative, but destructive and detrimental to ourselves and to the

18. Mark R. Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 125.

19. Shane Claiborne, and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Common Prayer Pocket Edition: A liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

world in which we live.

Those of us of Christian faith—specifically in the United States—when confronted with this dichotomy, are prone to apathy or acquiescence. Both lead to some sort of resignation rather than theological reflection and prophetic action. One kind of resignation is to consider ourselves simply aliens or exiles with no real social influence or purpose in the world around us. In the book *Resident Alien*, Stanley Hauerwas writes, rather than resignation, “The loss of Christendom [should give] us a joyous opportunity to reclaim the freedom to proclaim the gospel in a way in which we cannot when the main social task of the church is to serve as one among many helpful props for the state.”²⁰

Or, we acquiesce and become a part of the brokenness and oppression, blind to it, or in collusion and conformity with the broken and oppressive systems of the world. For example, we are choosing to ignore the brokenness found within the social structures in which we live when we support and patronize businesses and corporations that choose not to pay a living wage while collecting unprecedented profits; or when we ignore companies that place their manufacturing plants in countries where cheap labor is exploited; or when they set up shell companies offshore as a way of avoiding taxes.

There is a strong tendency for Christian community to either claim that this world is not our home or instead, to become at home in the world. True praxis of shalom avoids both extremes and instead operates out of a realistic understanding of the world as it is and yet, as Harvey Cox wrote, does so as “a responding community,” as a “people whose task it is to discern the action of God in the world and to join in [God’s] work.”²¹

It is instructive to comprehend the radicalness of the prophet Jeremiah’s statement in Jeremiah 29.

20. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Alien: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014).

21. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City, Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1966), 91.

This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to the all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! **And work for the peace** [shalom—completeness, wholeness, health, prosperity] of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its *welfare* [or shalom] will determine your *welfare*.

We need only to read excerpts of Psalm 137 to gain insight into the exiles' view of their present plight. The Psalmist writes,

Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem. We put away our harps, hanging them on the branches of the poplar trees. For our captors demanded a song from us. Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn: "Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!" But how can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a pagan land... O Lord, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem... O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us. Happy is the one who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!²²

In this context, the words of God from the prophet Jeremiah offer two radically new concepts to the exiles. First, shalom is not just for Jerusalem and the Israelites. Shalom is also for the Babylonians, the very ones who have taken the Israelites into captivity. Second, and maybe even more difficult to comprehend, is the revelation that it is God who has sent them to Babylon and that God has done so for a specific purpose.

These radical concepts are useful in this search for shalom as spiritual formation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began with the premise that there is a primordial spark of Divinity within all things, and that this spark draws all of creation toward shalom. I explored Scripture and built a biblical and theological foundation for the relevancy of shalom. I also offered a definition of shalom and reimagined the doctrines of sin and salvation as they relate to shalom. Finally, I developed the concept of the praxis, or, the experiencing and expressing of shalom.

In this search for shalom the question becomes, how do we engage in the praxis of shalom for transformative purposes? How do we become spiritually formed and transformed through experiencing

22. Psalm 137:1-5;7-8, New Living Translation.

and expressing shalom? This project, *Shalom as Spiritual Formation: Experiencing and Expressing Shalom*, is an attempt to answer these questions.

CHAPTER 3

PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This journey toward the premise of shalom being something that can be experienced and expressed spiritually and theologically began with my decision to pursue a Doctor of Ministry Degree. As a pastor from the American Baptist Churches of the Central Region, I was familiar with Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma and its partnership with Drew Theological School to host a cohort of the Doctor of Ministry degree. My intention was to commute from Kansas City, Kansas to Bacone, in Muskogee, for my doctoral studies.

In the process of enrolling in the doctoral program I soon discovered that the Bacone cohort was not going to form that year. However, a new cohort was being offered in community development and congregational growth with a concentration in the theology of shalom. Finding the class descriptions to be intriguing and inviting, I asked to be a part of that cohort which was based in San Francisco at Glide Memorial Methodist Church located in the Tenderloin neighborhood.

The intellectual stimulation of the classes, the buzz and energy of San Francisco, and the deep spiritual connection I felt when discussing and studying the subject of shalom led to an immediate attraction to the idea of shalom being primordial and universal—something tangible that could be experienced and expressed.

This project attempts to develop and implement a spiritual formation process which facilitates an inner and outer peace, joy, and serenity of which Thich Nhat Hanh and other spiritual writers envision. Based on a theological understanding of shalom as both experiential and expressive, this formation process, if successful, will be used by First Baptist Church of Turner as a means of

integrating spiritual formation and congregational growth and community development in the greater Turner community.

The project is made up of three phases. In phase one I develop a three session spiritual formation exercise titled, “Experiencing and Expressing Shalom.” In the second phase, I lead the Lay Advisory Committee through the three sessions. The major component in each of these exercises is a “Shalom Safari” in which the participants go to a place in the Turner community in search of shalom. They are encouraged to utilize all of their senses to experience what shalom smells like, tastes like, sounds like, looks like and feels like in the biblical spirit of Psalm 34:8 which says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” In the final phase, the Lay Advisory Committee and I evaluate the process for its potential use at First Baptist Church of Turner.

In this chapter I offer a description of the Turner community and First Baptist Church of Turner. I describe the preparation, action, and evaluation phases of the project. In the preparation phase I recruited the Lay Advisory Committee to function both as a small group and a focus group. I then developed and conducted a small group format of three sessions playfully referred to as Shalom Safaris. The safaris were followed by three evaluation sessions conducted in focus group fashion using a combination of group discussions, written reflections, and a written survey. The project took place over a three-month period.

Description and Demographics of the Turner Community

The Turner area is defined by the following boundaries: Kansas Avenue to the North; Interstate 635 to the East; County Line Road to the South; and, 59th Street to the West.

Turner has two distinct business areas. The first area is located in what could be defined as “Turner proper”, the older area that would be most obviously referred to as Turner. 55th Street is the main thoroughfare that runs through this area. This area includes a bank (not local), a private medical

clinic, a barber shop, a liquor store, a beauty shop, a photography studio,¹ a veterinarian, two gas station/convenient stores, a tanning salon, a print shop, a realtor's office, and three chiropractors. The other area is best defined as a couple of strip malls located across from each other on Shawnee Drive, in the southeast corner of Turner. Businesses in this include a bank (not local), three fast food restaurants, a CVS drugstore, a Chinese restaurant, an adequate grocery store, a Pizza Hut, a Dollar General (low-end general merchandise), a Mexican restaurant, and a few assorted shops, including two gas station/convenient stores. There is also a gas station/convenience store and a McDonald's located in the northeast corner of the Turner area.

There are eight schools in the Turner area. Seven are a part of the Turner School District 202: Turner, Junction, Midland, and Oak Grove Elementary; Turner Middle; Turner High; and Endeavor, an alternative school, located elsewhere in the Turner boundaries. The eighth school is a private Christian school operated by a church in the community. Turner has its own library located in the Turner Recreation Center (Turner Rec). Turner Rec is administratively a part of the Turner School District and offers many community activities for children, youth, and adults.

Within the Turner community there are four parks and one community garden. Pierson Lake Park is the largest with several shelters and a small, stocked lake for fishing. Leo Alvey Park is of adequate size with a walking path and a few shelters, as does Matney Park. The smallest park was recently built and also has a walking path but no shelters. The community garden is a recent voluntary neighborhood effort and offers garden plots as well as space for gathering and picnicking.

The community of Turner has a long and colorful history. Its earliest history begins in 1828 with the first trading post in the area, located on the bend of the Kansas River and established by Cyprian Chouteau.² Slowly, the area became settled with businesses and homes established. Charles

1. This Studio does school pictures for Turner schools.

2. Betty Gibson, *Pride of the Golden Bear* (Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1981), 7-8.

Lovelace was a prominent business man who established a saw mill.³ Lovelace was also a founding member of First Baptist Church of Turner. By 1854, many farms had sprung up in the vicinity, and through the years, even with two major floods, railroad expansion, and other happenings, Turner continued to blossom and grow. Although never incorporated and ultimately annexed by the city of Kansas City, Kansas, even now, the community maintains a distinctness and atmosphere all its own.

There are 17 churches within the geographical boundaries of Turner, as well as an informal group of Muslims who meet regularly for prayer. There are three Baptist churches (one ABCUSA, one Southern Baptist, and one Independent). There are three Korean congregations (two Presbyterian and one Assembly of God Full Gospel). In addition, there are several non-denominational churches, a Hmong congregation, and an Ethiopian Orthodox congregation.

The community of Turner has at least two neighborhood groups as well as several other civic type organizations including the Turner Lions Club, The Golden Agers, the Elderbearies, Fortnightly and others. Turner also has dedicated and well-trained neighborhood patrol group. The abundance of religious and civic groups offers many opportunities for ecumenical and community connections.

According to the 2010 Census, there are 4,437 housing units in Turner, with 4,089 of those units occupied. Out of the occupied units, 2,972 are owner-occupied. Turner has a population of 11,524. Out of that population 3,578, or 31% are under 20; 698, or 6% are 20 to 24; 1,749, 15% are 25-34; 2,350, or 20% are 35-49; 2,014, or 18% are 50-64; and, 1,135, or 10% are over 65. Ethnically, 2,606, or 23% of Turner residents are Hispanic or Latino with the remaining 8,918, or 77% being Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino. Racially, 9,045, or 78% of Turner residents are White; 511, or 4% are African-American; 271, or 2% are Asian; 108, or 1% are American-Indian or Alaskan Native; 26, or

3. <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/wyandotte/wyandotte-co-p18.html#TURNER>, accessed 8-15-14.

.2% are Native Hawaiian; 1,145, 10% are Other; and 418, or 4% identify as two or more racial categories.⁴

Description and Demographics of First Baptist Church of Turner

According to local Turner historian, Betty Gibson,

At Christmas time 1857, Dr. Richard and Hannah Hewitt...came for a visit and to share the holidays in the home of their daughter and family, Charles, Louisa, and little Eldridge [Lovelace]. [Edward and Thirza Petegren were] invited to join them for the festivities and after devotions and a time of worship these first settlers, all Christian families (Petegren—Christian Church, Lovelace—Baptist, and Hewitts—Methodist, South) with their devoted servants discussed the need and decided to meet each Sunday for regular worship in the Lovelace home. This is the beginning of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church which became the First Baptist Church of Turner.⁵

According to FBCT's 2007 internally published historical account of the past 150 years, "Born of a need, cradled in the arms of a loving Heavenly Father, nurtured by the pioneers of a harsh and lonely existence in the wilderness of the Kansas Territory, 'The Church', now known as the First Baptist Church of Turner had its beginning..."⁶ It collaborates Gibson's account by stating, "'The Church' began in the Lovelace home..., Baptist possibly because Charles Lovelace was Baptist and the American Baptist Foreign Mission Board had established a struggling headquarters in Atchison in 1855."⁷

The ethos of First Baptist Church of Turner is rooted deeply in frontier ideals. Its founding correlates with upheaval and violence along the Missouri—Kansas border in the late 1850's to early 1860's. The history of "Bleeding Kansas" and the Civil War are inextricably woven into the history of the church. It's deep sense of mission, its continued understanding of its dependency on God, as well as its determination and perseverance in the face of adversity and struggles is evident over 150 years after

4. www.census.gov Census Tracts 436, 437, 438.03, and 438.04, accessed 8-15-14.

5. *Pride of the Golden Bear*, 51.

6. FBCT internal document covering 1857-2007 history of the church, 1.

7. *Ibid.*, 1.

its beginning. Even now, FBCT remains energized and is committed to exploration and experimentation in its quest for continued relevancy to its surrounding community. Its history portrays a working congregation sensitive to cultural changes and open to changing its methods and approaches in presenting the Good News. Most recently, as a result of reflection and evaluation, the church began defining itself as “a frontier church – an emerging church – a faith-ing church.”

In examining the cultural context of First Baptist Church of Turner, general observation would indicate a majority of lower to middle income working class individuals and families, with a small percentage of those of higher income. The congregation is made up of a large percentage of older retirees, widows, and widowers, but that is not to say that there is not a portion of younger, working individuals as well as families with children of teen age and younger. Additionally, growth in the congregation over the past six years has been in this area of younger demographics.

FBCT has a congregation of just over 100 households with about 216 persons who are either members or in some way connected to the congregation. Out of those, 50, or 23% are under 20; 23, or 11% are 20 to 24; 19, 8% are 25-34; 13, or 6% are 35-49; 51, or 24% are 50-64; and, 60, or 28% are over 65. When compared to these same community demographics, it becomes evident that the congregation has a much larger over 65 demographic than does the Turner community. Ethnicity and Race are both much more complex, although, the congregation reflects the community in that it is predominantly a white congregation, with some Hispanic or Latinos, as well as African Americans. It should be noted that there are several in the congregation who would identify as two or more racial categories.

Theologically, FBCT is somewhat progressive and inclusive, especially for a Baptist church in the Midwest. What unifies the church is a commitment to community and mission rather than to doctrinal agreement. This is reflective of its denominational connection to American Baptist Churches, USA. ABCUSA is the most progressive and diverse of the many Baptists denominations in America.

A tangible example of FBCT's progressiveness and inclusiveness is the physical layout of its worship space. In the 1970's the space was redesigned, allowing closer, more intimate worship in a semi-circle rather than the traditional rows from front to back. At the front is a platform with a split chancel. In the middle of the chancel hangs a cross with the altar (or communion table) in front of it. This is an unusual layout for a Baptist worship space in which the pulpit is usually dominate. I believe such a design offers a glimpse into the hospitable and inclusive nature of the congregation. It is in such context that this project took place.

Preparations

One of the initial preparations to occur was the recruitment of the Lay Advisory Committee. A good Committee, functioning not only as project advisors, but also as both a small group and focus group, was crucial to the success of the project. I wanted Committee members that were dedicated to the project and interested in exploring the possibility of experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation. It was also important to me that the Committee members be chosen objectively, based solely on that criteria.

Recruitment of the Lay Advisory Committee

The first step in the recruitment process was the development of a list of potential Committee members assembled from the church membership and regular attendees. It was my intent in assembling the list to develop a diverse and inclusive list of potential members that crossed all demographics (age, gender, theological background, economics, etc.). Once the list was assembled, I set a date and time and then invited all on the list to an informational meeting. I developed a brief power point presentation that presented the purpose of the project, as well as pertinent definitions, specific dates and activities involved, and the Communities of Shalom acrostic (a foundational piece of the project).

I also developed a short, four statement survey to be completed at the end of the informational meeting. Each question was answered on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being *not at all*, 5 being *absolutely*. The four statements were as follows:

- I am interested in participating in this doctoral project.
- To the best of my knowledge I will be able to attend all events.
- I am prepared to fully participate.
- I desire to learn more about experiencing and expressing shalom.

There was also a place on the survey where the person could simply answer “I am unable to participate.” Once completed, the surveys were collected and the numbers on each survey were added together. Those with the highest numbers were asked to serve on the Committee. A total of six members were chosen.

The Development of the Small Group Format

Sam O’Neal, in his book *Field Guide for Small Group Leaders*, makes reference of “the big idea.” He defines it as “the main premise you want to explore with your small group during a given meeting.” He suggests that a person will have the “most success as a leader if [they] identify a specific idea or theme [they] want [their] members to encounter during their time together.” He says the big idea “should not be overly complicated or time consuming...Rather, a ‘big idea’ is a simple decision that helps you stay focused as you prepare for and lead a small group meeting.”⁸

The “big idea” for the project’s small group sessions was the possibility of experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation. The participants were encouraged to think of themselves as explorers on the shalom frontier. The foundational piece in each session was a Shalom Safari—a time spent exploring a specific place in the Turner community while intentionally attempting to see, taste,

8. Sam O’Neal, *Field Guide for Small Group Leaders* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 80-81.

touch, hear, smell, and emotionally feel shalom. We measured our experiences using the Communities of Shalom acrostic:

- **S** – systemic and sustainable change
- **H** – healing, health, harmony and wholeness
- **A** – asset-based community development
- **L** – love for God, self, and neighbor
- **O** – organized for direct action
- **M** – multicultural, multifaith collaboration⁹

Ultimately, the standard format that developed for the three small group sessions consisted of gathering and preparing for the safari; the safari itself; and, returning and reflecting. Various readings, videos, and other sources were used as a part of the gathering and preparing time.

The three safaris included a community health fair at the Turner Recreation Center, a trip to the local business area in Turner followed by lunch at the local Mexican restaurant, and a tour of the Turner Community Garden accompanied with conversations with garden organizers and volunteers.

Upon return from the safari, time was spent discussing and debriefing the experience. Participants were also asked to write a reflection paper using the Communities of Shalom acrostic as a guideline. It was recommended that the reflection be written as soon as possible after the experience in order to best learn and reflect. Each small group experience will be more thoroughly reported later in this chapter. First, I will describe the development of the focus group process.

The Development of the Focus Group Process

At the completion of the three Shalom Safaris, the Advisory Committee shifted from the role of small group participants to that of focus group evaluators. The purpose of the focus group was to

9. <http://communitiesofshalom.org/threads>, accessed October, 3, 2014.

engage in a critical assessment process through an evaluation of the small group experience, including its reflection papers, group discussions, and safaris.

A major component of the evaluation process was an eleven paged focus group questionnaire¹⁰ which attempted to qualify and quantify such things as the participant's understanding of shalom, the experiencing of shalom, and the expressing of shalom. In each of these categories, the evaluator was asked to assign a number between 1 and 5, (1 being *terrible*, 5 being *great*), rating each category before and after the project. In addition, each safari was evaluated concerning the participant's expectations and how well those expectations were met. The same 1 through 5 rating was used. They were also asked to reflect on their expectations, on why they were or were not met.

The overall project was also evaluated—its processes, resources, handouts and information. The survey asked the following questions: What worked? What didn't work? What needed to be changed or discarded? And, what needed to be added? Finally, each focus group evaluator was asked to offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation at First Baptist Church of Turner. The results of this survey will be examined and discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters.

Conclusion

In review, this project is an attempt to develop a spiritual formation process which facilitates the experience and expression of shalom. I have designed and implemented the project in the following three phases:

Phase One: Preparation of a three session spiritual formation exercise titled,
“Experiencing and Expressing Shalom.”

¹⁰ See Appendix.

Phase Two: Implementation of the three sessions with the Lay Advisory Committee as small group participants. The major component in each of these exercises is a “Shalom Safari.”

Phase Three: Evaluation of the Safari process by the Lay Advisory Committee and myself.

In addition to developing the preparation, implementation, and evaluation phases of the project, I offer a description (with demographics) of the Turner community and First Baptist Church of Turner.

So far, in this thesis, I state my narrative of concern, offer a biblical and theological rationale for my thesis, and describe the project design and methodology, as well as offer a description and demographics of the Turner community and FBCT. Chapter Four will be a report of the three Safaris.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT

The idea of shalom safaris was meant to provide a playful, intriguing way to consider the possibility of shalom being something that can be consistently experienced and expressed, and be spiritually formative. It was meant to offer the potential of a daily life adventure. It was based on the belief that the potential of shalom exists everywhere, all the time, and in all things. It was an idea that was birthed out of experiences and encounters during my visits to San Francisco and was blossoming into an ever-increasing intentional way of life. One encounter comes to mind that demonstrates well this potential of experiencing and expressing shalom as a daily discipline.

I was standing at Powell and Market Street where the BART and the Powell Trolley line meet. Two stomp dancers had attracted a crowd. They had laid a piece of plywood down and a boom box was blasting.

Many of us were waiting to take the trolley to the Pier 39 area and had gravitated toward the two guys engaged in the stomp dance competition. We all got caught up in the rhythm and the music. We egged them on with our cheers and our applause and they competed even harder.

There in that experience, divisions and differences faded away. There was a camaraderie—a wholeness—a completeness—even a unity. I'm thinking it was shalom—experienced and expressed. But, there was one guy who appeared out of place. He watched the dancers for just a little bit, and then I noticed that he rolled his eyes and shook his head in disgust. It made me sad for him. It appeared he had missed it—the wholeness—the completeness—that moment of unity—that moment of shalom. The idea of shalom safaris is about not missing the experience! The shalom experience is participatory, not observational or for bystanders.

For this project, we conducted three safaris in search of shalom within our community. As a guideline, participants were encouraged to engage the senses (including the emotions), and to utilize the “threads of shalom” identified in the Communities of Shalom acrostic.

Safari I: Turner Recreation Center Community Health Fair Safari

The Turner Recreation Center and the Community Health Fair was an excellent beginning for our experiment for experiencing and expressing shalom. The question that needed to be answered was whether we, the small group participants, could observe and experience shalom, and whether from those experiences, we could learn ways in which we could express shalom.

Although it was a cold and windy day, we decided to walk the short distance from the church to the Recreation Center. As we approached we noticed that the Center seemed quite busy. There was a Lion’s Club trailer outside where they were conducting hearing test. The gymnasium was full of booths and tables where members of the community were getting information or receiving services. The group scattered and began to explore, in search of shalom.

Later, we regathered and returned to the church to debrief. At the close of our conversation, the small group members were tasked with writing a reflection paper about their experience and were encouraged to use the shalom acrostic as their guide. They were to have the reflections completed by our next meeting. I have included some of their thoughts here.

One small group participant noted that the Rec Center was a long established part of the community and wrote of the buildings history. She noted that built originally as the Turner Elementary School, it had also been utilized over the years as the Junior High School, then the Senior High School, and ultimately the Recreation Center. The participant recognized this use of an existing building as one example of utilizing the assets in the community.

Other group participants mentioned community assets available at the Rec Center and offered at the Health Fair. The center offers daily social and physical activities—many led by members of the

community. A branch of the Kansas City Kansas Library is housed in the center along with a full size gym and exercise room. Groups and activities exist for all ages. One participant wrote:

“I do believe that if shalom is to be with us, we need more of what we saw at the Turner community experience... There was bustle, there was peace, there was excitement and a hope of community helping itself and those who are a part to have a better life, and to receive what God is offering to [God’s] children.”

The Health Fair offered blood pressure checks, blood sugar testing, eye exams, hearing tests, as well as general information concerning good health habits. The group participated in many of these activities and noted the healing, harmony, and wholeness of the experience.

My observation of the Shalom Safari is that the group participants were pleasantly surprised. Actually, I was pleasantly surprised. Although I had offered information to the group and congregation, and had presented sermons on the meaning of the shalom, the group members still had only a fundamental understanding of the word, and at this point, the concept of experiencing and expressing shalom was just a theory.

However, with the acrostic as our guide and with the intentional goal of experiencing shalom, we went as explorers and investigators. The written reflections and group conversations offer evidence that participants were, at the least, intentional in their search and were attempting to gain a fundamental understanding of experiencing shalom. What follows is an example of one participant’s reflection.

S – Systemic and Sustainable Change

The Turner Recreational Center is a long established part of the community. This building has housed the school’s administration, the elementary school, and is now the local public library and the community center for the very young to the senior Elderberries.¹ It is funded through the Turner School

1. The name of a 50+ group in the Turner community.

System, and dues and fees from the public. We are fortunate to have an active center with caring, efficient staff.

H – Healing, Health, Harmony, and Wholeness

Health and wellness are strong points of consideration. The day of visitation there was a health fair that included blood donation, blood pressure, sugar testing, other health services, community gardening, and students from the Kansas City, Kansas School of Nursing. Everyone was working together. You could see people working together—wanting to help. Smiles were everywhere. Of special interest was the socializing and words of cheer and comfort given those donating blood.

A – Asset Based Community Development

The building is open daily with well qualified personnel. Many of the services are free...The center is open to suggestions to better the community.

L – Love of God, Self, and Neighbors

I didn't see the gospel spoken, but I saw it everywhere in action. The caring, the smiles, the sense of security and the orderly conduct. The constant attempts to fill the health, cultural, and educational needs of the community. It was a joy to be around the staff.

O – Organized for Direct Action

The staff is well organized and operations run smooth.

M – Turner is a multicultural area. It is represented by many different churches. The First Baptist Church of Turner is exceptionally active with the youth of the community—those within and without the church building. It appears as though the multifaith live comfortably in the area without fear. I don't observe an open "push" of multifaith collaboration.² I have not visited a church of a different faith or culture. The school system has a challenge with the multiple languages and learning levels. Yet, Turner is meeting these challenges on a daily basis.

2. This was a common observation among the participants throughout the Safari experience.

From this visit, I came away with good feelings. It is a community that cares about all of the people. It was a special day. I could see love and care for those giving and those receiving. Shalom.

I offer this example of a participant's reflections on this safari, not as evidence that they possessed an in-depth understanding of the acrostic or shalom, but as evidence that there was an intentionality in this first attempt to observe and experience shalom.³

Safari II. Turner Shopping Area Safari

Turner has two distinct business areas. This safari took place in the business area consisting of two strip malls located across from each other on Shawnee Drive, in the southeast corner of Turner. The businesses in this area include a bank, three fast food restaurants, a drugstore, a Chinese restaurant, a grocery store, a Pizza Hut, a Dollar General, a Mexican restaurant, and a few assorted shops. Our purpose was to observe—to engage the senses—in an attempt to experience shalom while using the Communities of Shalom acrostic as our guide.

Following our visits to this area, we de-briefed over lunch at a local, sensory-rich, Mexican restaurant. During the lunch we discussed the Focus Group Questionnaire. When asked, “What were your expectations?” one participant wrote,

“I was looking forward to this event because the night before I had taken a woman to get groceries and had looked at how that grocery store had put all the cheap food in one section – dividing the haves from the have nots. I wanted to see how this shopping area was set up.”

Another participant admitted that they had no expectations, writing.

“I wondered about the Mexican food and worried about what to order or how to eat it.⁴ I was not fully prepared to experience shalom—but it didn't take long to identify it. It was all around me—location—different businesses—accommodating people, and those who went out of their way to be friendly.”

Another safari participant noted:

3. See Appendix for other safari reflections.

4. This person had never eaten Mexican food before.

“our field trip to the shopping center...was a bit of an eye-opener, in the respect that my mind is often too busy to actually take the time to observe things around me.” The participant went on to say, “I am fairly certain that I am not the only one that has felt that way. Saying that, makes me more aware that I should take the time to appreciate and recognize shalom in my own life.”

This is a simple but profound observation. Intentionality and mindfulness are necessary in any spiritual formation process, and vital to this project.

The participant noticed the locks and bars on some of the businesses. “...as we went from place to place, the protection and caution seemed to carry over to many areas; inside store product cabinets locked to prevent shoplifting, door scanners and ceiling mirrors...” They expressed sadness that such things were necessary, and further commented, “It made me think of it enough the next day to pray an extra prayer for those who have made this necessary.” Another participant also observed that “the stores, on the whole, seemed to have numerous items that people want, but not necessarily need.” This person further noted, “Maybe this is anti-shalom in our society,” alluding to this contributing to the lack of wholeness and completeness in society.

Another participant admitted expecting to see people doing their own thing and being unaware of others. Such expectations were not met. The participant wrote of being greeted by a worker who “smiled and asked how we were,” and a customer who opened the door while speaking pleasantly. Once again, although not exhibiting a deep and thorough grasp of shalom, it was obvious that the participants were focused and intentional in their attempt to observe and experience shalom, and seemed to be progressing to a deeper level of spiritual experience.

Safari III: Turner Community Garden Safari

Our final safari took place at the Turner Community Garden, a large flower and vegetable garden planted and maintained by community volunteers on land donated by the local railroad. The story of the Turner Community Garden is an excellent example the multi-cultural, multi-faith collaboration that is a vital part of shalom.

“The garden is almost like a small community park with tables, chairs, walkways, green houses, and even chickens! A trail is in the beginning stages with a full view of the railroad... You can see the hard work of love... This is an area open the public, a peaceful place... to think and to enjoy.”⁵

The land is adjacent to the Turner Family Health Clinic operated by Dr. Mohammad Ghassemi (Dr. G), a practicing Muslim. Dr. G. was instrumental in acquiring the land and in offering funds to prepare it and fence it. In many ways, the Community Garden is probably the best example of shalom in the Turner Community.

As one participant stated our expectations “look around, and find out what the garden workers were doing.” As noted above, our church is immediately south on 55th St, and we were already considering ways work with them and them with us. “We hoped to find out what they needed and if they could help us.”

The participant noted, “We were met by very friendly and helpful people who worked in the garden. We received information, encouragement and manpower to create some landscaping... near the street... It’s a truly lovely garden with caring, helpful people volunteering.”

Another participant offered the following observations:

“From all I had heard, the community garden has been something very special. This was my first time to visit, and even in the early spring with no growth, my imagination ran wild. Even today, I find myself turning my head as I drive by to see what new is going on... Seeing the potential of what the garden results will be, and knowing how many will come together to make that possible, is shalom. I enjoyed the visit and recognize God’s shalom for us in areas like the community garden!”⁶

Conclusion

Overall, it would appear that the safaris were effective. When I think of safari, I think of adventure and exploration. I imagine a group of explorers coming together, gathering the tools and

5. One participant’s description of the Community Garden.

6. This participant has become the volunteer responsible for our landscaped areas around the church building, as well as the liaison between First Baptist Church of Turner and the Turner Community Garden.

resources needed to make the safari a success, and then going off together into the wilds in search of elusive prey. A safari can be an exploratory excursion up the mountain, or a trip into the jungle, or as in this case, a playful morning or afternoon checking out our own neighborhoods, in search of shalom. Either way, a safari must be well planned. Those on the safari must be prepared and ready to meet the demands of the adventure, and be alert to the signs that what they are searching for is close at hand.

One participant noted being able to see through “shalom eyes”. It is important for those on safari to see through “safari eyes.’ In other words, be in the hunt and be thinking and acting like the explorers that they are. Throughout the project, in each shalom safari, the group participants successfully came together and prepared for the safari. They received instructions and information from me, the safari guide. Once prepared, we traveled as group to the safari location, either on foot, or in caravan. Upon arrival, sometimes we hung together and other times we split up, using the threads of shalom from Communities of Shalom as our tools.

One participant wrote, “[We saw] different individuals coming together and working together. We expanded our world.” Another wrote, “It was good doing this as a group and seeing the way the experience changed people within the group.” Safaris will do that. Safaris expand our world. They change us as we explore and as we experience the adventure. This happens because those on safari are focused intentionally on what they are doing and for what they are searching, and from such experience and change, those on safari can return and then express the benefits of that safari to others. This project, through the safaris, facilitated an intentional, spiritually formative process that allowed the participants to look for shalom and in doing so, as one participant wrote, the safaris “increased [our] awareness level [of shalom] immensely.” We gathered, we prepared, we went on safari, and we discovered and experienced shalom!

From my perspective, the safaris were the beginning of a continued spiritual discipline—for me and for the participants. I have had the opportunity to observe some of the participants in other settings.

It would appear that the safaris have offered a spiritual foundation that facilitates the searching for shalom in the stuff of everyday life. The search is twofold.

First: it is the practice of being aware of the opportunity to experience shalom.

Second: it is the practice of expressing shalom to others. Both myself, and those who participated have gained new perspectives about shalom and those new perspectives are leading to new and deeper ways to minister to others in our congregation and community.

Reflecting on my own personal experience, I have discovered that engaged as intended, shalom safaris can be playful and intriguing. Shalom safaris do offer a creative, spiritually formative way to begin the day and to live life. When I take the time to center my thoughts and allow my emotions and my heart to find their way to God, I can then make an intentional decision go through each day in search of shalom. When I take the time to do this, I make room for the possibility of that day being an adventure.

I have come to believe even more strongly that the potential of experiencing and expressing shalom exists everywhere, all the time, and in all things. In living out such conviction, all things—offering or receiving a smile, holding the door for someone, birds singing, squirrels playing, singing together, and talking with the homeless— all become the experience and expression of shalom. The safari experience has been life-changing and has led to a new way of thinking and of living out my faith.

CHAPTER 5

CHANGES THAT OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT

One of the unexpected results of this project was our connection with the volunteers at the Community Garden. By the time of this visit to the garden, we had already been in conversation with the Garden workers concerning a partnership to expand the landscaping, which had begun in front of the clinic, to the front of the church (which is immediately south of the clinic). This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

As the safaris came to an end, one group participant made the following comments.

“Shalom is a very misunderstood word. It’s like trying to define love. I’ve spent a lifetime trying to show love, and now I’m trying to spread shalom along with love. It has to start in the heart. Sharing a smile and a kind word goes a long way. If all of us in the community would try it, it could spread worldwide. The peace I feel daily is truly a God thing.”

The safaris offered an opportunity to intentionally search for shalom in an experiential way. Such process is highly subjective and my intent was to allow as much space for the participants to experience and learn in ways that were most meaningful for them, while finding adequate ways to measure quantitatively the results of this experiments. In the next section, I will offer the findings of our evaluation, in the order in which the evaluation survey was structured.

Qualitative and Quantitative Impressions

The Lay Advisory Committee having served as the small group, shifted tasks and assumed the duties of a focus group. This Role, included discussions, written reflections, and the Focus Group Questionnaire. These elements of the evaluation process are intended to offer qualitative and quantitative evidence concerning the effectiveness of the project. The premise of the project was that shalom can be experienced and expressed as a spiritually formative process. The Focus Questionnaire

offers a scale of 1 to 5; 1 being, *not at all*, 2 being *very little*, 3 being *somewhat*, 4 being *much*, and 5 being, *very much*.

Understanding Shalom

The first section of the questionnaire concerns itself with the participant's understanding of shalom. The first question asked in section one is, "When the project began, how developed was your understanding of shalom?" The average of the participants' answers on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.8, between *very little* and *somewhat*. When asked, "How has your understanding of shalom changed?" the answer averaged at 4.8, between *much* and *very much*.

When asked how their understanding had changed and what caused such change, on participant mentioned foundational definitions and bible passages that were offered through sermons and safari sessions. The participant found "all the portions of the experience, both in the building and out in the community," helpful. Another stated, "Much has changed. I see more community involvement. I look for what could be improved or built upon... Shalom meant 'hello/goodbye'. Now I see it differently." One commented that the original meaning of shalom had been "a Jewish greeting or farewell, an offer of peace." They stated further, "I have come to realize that shalom, and many other words are much deeper than the surface, therefore, making the meaning deeper for me."

Experiencing Shalom

Concerning experiencing shalom, when asked, "How developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom when this project began?" the participants' average answer was 2.3, slightly above *very little*. When asked, "How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed?" the average answer was 4.5, half way between *much* and *very much*. When asked how such a change in their understanding of experiencing shalom had occurred, and what caused such change, the participants mentioned the safaris as helpful.

One participant mentioned realizing that they had been hurrying through life's experiences and relational experiences, not looking for the good, or shalom, in them. They spoke of how looking "for ways to express care and understanding in situations, and with people I barely noticed before."

Another participant stated that "a better understanding of the meaning of shalom" caused a change in their ability to experience shalom. They said, "I am more aware and focused on what can cause me to experience shalom. I can experience shalom with music, babies, and the simple things in life."

Expressing Shalom

The questionnaire then asked the same questions about the expressing of shalom. The average answer concerning the understanding of expressing shalom before the project began was 2.2, almost at *very little*. When the participants were asked how their understanding of expressing shalom had changed, the average answer was 4.2, slightly above *much*.

One participant commented about wanting others "to try and have some glimpse of what shalom is through me..." This person stated, "My conscious thought process of shalom has deepened." Another participant said, "The project has opened my heart and soul to the fact Christians need to be kinder, gentler, and more Christ like...Shalom provides a door to walk through, leaving the old behind and achieving the new."

A third participant said, "One thing I did was pray about it, asked for help to view people differently and be more friendly, and to look for shalom." The person further commented,

"I was unsure and fearful at first, to try this interaction with people. I didn't know what to expect, so I decided to think that people would respond positively. I believed people would respond to a word or a smile, and I began to notice that they did. I think my awareness [of shalom] and going out of my way to see and act [experience and express shalom] has increased."

Additional Comments

At this point in the questionnaire, the focus group participants were asked to rate various aspects of the overall project. They were asked to rate the areas on a scale of 1 to 5; 1 being *terrible*, 2

being *bad*, 3 being *OK*, 4 being *good*, and 5 being *great*. They were asked to rate the following aspects of the project: each safari; the overall project experience; Playing 4 Change videos used; the instructional shalom video by Annie Allen; and, project handouts and information. They were then asked to comment on what worked, what didn't work, what needed to be changed or discarded, and, what needed to be added. Last, they were encouraged to offer any additional comments or suggestions.

The Safaris

In the first section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate their understanding of shalom, their understanding of experiencing shalom, and their understanding of expressing shalom both before and after the safaris. The results show a definite increase in each of those areas. In this section of the participants were asked to rate each safari and to offer a justification for the rating they assigned.

The Turner Health Fair Safari received an overall rating of 4.4, about halfway between *good* and *great*. As the initial introduction to the premise of experiencing and expressing shalom, participants observed friendliness and a real interest in improving the community while offering a variety of services. One participant rated it as such "because the people had a cause and were interested in others." Another participant also spoke of service, stating, "I saw people in all professions serving the community," and another simply defined the experience as "a good, overall representation of shalom."

The Turner Shopping Area Safari received a rating of 4.3, slightly lower than the Health Fair. But still in the good range. One participant made an interesting comment that is extremely relevant to experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation. They wrote, "I have looked at other shopping areas differently now." Such intentionality and mindfulness is what is needed if shalom is to be experienced and expressed. Another wrote, "This shopping area is where I shop. It's familiar and like home. I was able to look at it differently that day..." A third participant experienced "shalom represented in many different areas." They offered the observation that "to find shalom, we need to be

aware of the potential [of shalom].” It seemed during this safari that the participants exhibited more intentionality and awareness than was demonstrated in the first. Shalom was observed and experienced in small things like smiles, and greetings, and having doors held for them to enter.

The last safari took place at the Turner Community Garden. Its overall rating was 4.5, halfway between *good* and *great*. By this time in the process, the small group had gained a deeper understanding of shalom and had engaged in the intentional process of experiencing and expressing it. In a certain sense, this safari was the culmination of this group process. Throughout the project, new contacts had been made and partnerships formed, some with the garden volunteers. Now, at this last safari, the group was experiencing the garden itself.

In reading the participants’ comments concerning the garden safari, I realized that different personalities are going to experience shalom differently. For one participant, this safari was their favorite because of their personal love for the outside and nature. They noted that, in the community garden, “God is always present,” and the garden is always “a place to find peace and quiet.” For another, it was their least favorite safari because of the lack of “interface with people.”

From the data collected, it appears that through an intentional and mindful process, shalom can be experienced. One observed weakness in the process—although data shows that the participants had a greater understanding of the expressing of shalom, after the project, then they did before—is a lack of evidence concerning such expressing of shalom. It was discussed and suggestions were made as to what such expression might entail—much of that being what was seen and experienced offered as suggestions of expression.

Overall Project Experience

When asked to rate the overall project experience, the participants’ average rating was 4.4. One participant spoke of how, due to the project, their awareness of shalom and been immensely increased. It was interesting watching the group members work and collaborate together with the common

purpose of experiencing and expressing shalom, and to see them as individuals as their comprehension of shalom increased, as they became more adept at discovering and experiencing shalom, and as they explored ways in which shalom could be expressed in the Turner Community. As participants stated above, “We expanded our world!” We began to see “through shalom eyes. What a difference!”

Playing 4 Change Videos

One resource used during our gathering time before departing on the safari, was Playing 4 Change videos. The participants’ average rating of the videos was 4.4. My hope was to offer a tangible, experiential example of many coming together, using their individual assets as a means to create something universal and beautiful. One participant said, “It was nice seeing them out in the community doing music rather than isolated in a sound booth or recording studio.” Another experienced it as “people making music with love and laughter.” They described it as people “having fun together. It seemed the videos were effective in preparing the participants for the subsequent search for shalom. And I suspect these videos themselves offer a unique experience of shalom.

The Annie Allen Shalom Video

In one safari session, the group watched a video made by National Shalom Trainer, Annie Allen, in which she defined shalom and talked about Communities of Shalom. The video received an average rating of 3.6. This is unfortunate because the video is an excellent resource for helping someone understand shalom. It seems that the issue was not necessarily the video itself, but other issues. A couple of the participants mentioned hearing problems and being unable to understand what was being said. There may have been other issues that led to a poor reception. It’s possible that handouts along with the video may have made it more effective.

Project Handouts

Project handouts received an average rating of 4.4. One participant wrote that “having something in writing to see the bigger definition of shalom lead to more understanding.” Another found

the handouts “very clean, thoughtful, easy to follow, and very thorough. A third stated, “The acrostic was excellent.” They found the project clearly outlined. All participants seemed to find access to information and project requirements helpful.

Further Evaluation

In the final portion of the questionnaire each participant was asked to address the following impact indicators: what worked; what didn’t work; what needed to be changed, discarded, or added; and additional comments or suggestions.

What Worked

The participants seemed to appreciate the group process as a whole. It appears the participants see the project as more effective in a group setting than if each individual had went in search of shalom on their own. Even though the ultimate goal is an individual practice of intentionality and mindfulness in experiencing and expressing shalom, participants saw a group process as more effective in the initial learning stages.

The participants also expressed an appreciation of the group discussions. They commented on the discussions and on the time allowed for discussions. Ample time for both the safari and debriefing and discussion that followed seemed to be something the participants perceived as working well.

Last it was noted that participants’ willingness to be involved in the process and to try something different, contributed to the success of the project.

What Didn’t Work

One participant considered the Community Garden Safari a part of the project that didn’t work. This could be a somewhat subjective observation, in that this particular participant was more oriented toward activity and interaction. The garden safari was a quieter, less interactive experience. It also happened at a time of the year when flowers and plants were not growing or in bloom. As was noted

above, another participant rated the garden safari as their best safari. Obviously, experiencing and expressing shalom is somewhat subjective and relative to each individual.

What Needed to be Changed, Discarded, or Added

No one offered any suggested changes, but there were a few suggestions concerning what might be added.

It was noted that a bibliography given at the beginning of the project might be helpful for those who want to study the issue at a deeper level than is required for the project. It was also mentioned that a safari into a residential area might be helpful. Last, a brainstorming session on expressing shalom was mentioned, as well as a discussion on how this project and experience can be presented to the church in an acceptable manner.

Additional Comments and Suggestions

One participant wrote of the project as being an “overall good experience.” They also noted that “we as a group, never discussed ways we thought we could bring shalom to our church permanently.” I’m not sure that shalom can be brought into the church in any way other than by the group participants continuing the spiritual discipline of experiencing and expressing shalom and through a more thorough and developed process. They made the observation that “most [members] don’t even know what we did.” I find this a valid critique. One weakness in the project was that so much had to be accomplished in such a short amount of time. This will be addressed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Another spoke of their former involvement in community work at another church. They wrote, “I did not have the knowledge of Jeremiah 29 or Isaiah 65 then. I am so thankful that I have been challenged to grow in so many ways. Understanding the bible better has greatly deepened my ability to experience and express shalom. This is an excellent observation. *Shalom* in the Hebrew and *eirene* in the Greek are foundational in Christian Scripture. Learning to read and study scripture through shalom eyes is a very important part of experiencing and expressing shalom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data seems to strongly support that shalom can be experienced. If one is intentional and mindful, and has a conceptual understanding of shalom, then one can see shalom—hear shalom—feel shalom—experience shalom. It is less evident if the participants in the project were given ample opportunity to attempt the practice of expressing shalom. Some of the participants' comments suggest that they gained some understanding and were attempting to express it in their day to day lives. It is also evident that the project did not allow for much discussion or collaboration as to how a process of experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation could be developed for the congregation as a whole. Both of these shortcomings will be addressed in the final chapters that follows.

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTIONS

The project defined in this thesis was an experiment suggesting that shalom, being primordial and universal, could be experienced and expressed in a spiritually formative way, and could be instrumental in this time of transition and massive change within the Church in America. I presented shalom as primordial from the panentheistic perspective of that ever-existing spark of Divinity within all of creation that draws creation toward the healing wholeness and completeness of shalom. I presented shalom as universal because of its existence in some form, in most, if not all religions and belief systems.

In this project, shalom was offered as a possible solution to the declining participation and interest in both traditional and emerging Christianity. I suggested that a church, whether traditional, emergent, or a hybrid of both, does its best ministry when grounded in disciplines and practices that facilitate an experiential and expressive connection with God. This project was an attempt to reimagine and reconstruct the traditional process of spiritual formation in a new context—the emergent church—by employing the ancient concept of shalom.

I offered three premises for my project.

First: although some emergents suggest the emergent frontier is found only outside the traditional church, in reality, the emergent frontier also runs through the traditional church. In other words, the same questions and struggles experienced by emergent Christians take place within the walls of the traditional church as well as outside.

Second: it is through a continuing process of spiritual formation and disciplines that a vibrant and transformational Christianity thrives, regardless of its emergent or traditional bent.

Third: the ancient Hebrew concept of *shalom* is something that can be tangibly experienced and expressed and therefore is conducive to the practice of experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation.

Relevance and Context of Narrative of Concern

In many ways, this paper is a representation of the struggles of my faith journey up to this point. I have always been somewhat of a contrarian and one to question. Raised in the confines of fundamentalist evangelicalism, I became well indoctrinated in its proposed certainties. However, I was never completely satisfied with those certainties, but was unaware of any alternative ways of thinking or believing. In 1999 I entered seminary and began my emergent journey which continues to this day.

It's important to note, as it pertains to our relationship with the God of our understanding, we are all emerging—or, at least, we should be; not just Christians, but Buddhists, and Muslims, and Jews, and Hindus, as well as those of other faith traditions and those of no faith tradition. This emergent journey has eventually taken me to a place where certainty is no longer the important thing. I have come to see certainty as an artificial construct originally designed for my own sense of religious security. I have come to believe that life is not about the answers, but rather about the questions. Life is an adventure. It's about exploration. Life is a safari, and for me, this safari takes place on the emergent frontier and that frontier passes through the traditional church. For whatever reason, as a pastor and a minister, my calling has been one of being “the guy in the middle.” I'm the one that pushes the edges in the traditional church. I'm the one that finds ways to coax the more traditional congregations closer to the emergent frontier—the one that prods them to question, to begin to dismantle the artificial construct of certainty.

So, this narrative of concern was relevant and contextual. It speaks of where I live out my faith and ministry. It is out of this concern that I began to think about my ministry context and attempted to develop a foundational spiritual formation process that facilitated congregational growth and community development.

The Benefits of the Study of Shalom

The study and development of the biblical and theological foundations for the project have been the most transformative part of my journey. My understanding and appreciation of shalom has become broader and deeper. I remember a conversation with a friend, in which we were in a group gathering and were talking about some of things we did to center ourselves and enter into a time of meditation and communion with God. He told us about his practice of imagining himself floating upward into space until he reached the presence of God. For me, at the time of the conversation, that seemed to be just the opposite of communion or connection. Instead, it seemed cold, and distant, and disconnected. But as I reflect now, that image works, because God has become so much bigger while also becoming so much closer. The distance disappears and God is present everywhere.

Understanding God to be in all of creation and all of creation to be in God has enabled me to better experience the shalom that God offers. It has also enabled me to better express that shalom to others. As in all spiritual disciplines, there are times when I do this well, and times when I lose focus and do not practice it at all. This is a part of an emergent life with its ups and downs. The secret is to continue on, and when realizing that I am not living intentionally, to refocus and to look for shalom in the world around me.

Another area in which the study of shalom has been transformative is in the new connections that have been made. My studies have led to many discussions and conversations with those of other faith traditions as well as with agnostics and atheists. Building relationships with these new friends

from various faith journeys has not only helped me see shalom as universal, but has also helped me come to understand God as bigger than any of the religious boxes in which we try to put God.

Lessons Learned in Preparation and Methodology

One very helpful tool that I have acquired in my project preparations was the prospectus. The prospectus included the initial project proposal and timeline for the research, implementation, and writing phase of this doctoral program. I believe this format is transferable and usable in other contexts. I hope to make this a standard process for my future ministry projects. Although the prospectus was not always followed as written, it served as a valuable guideline. It was useful in keeping me and the lay advisory committee on track and was helpful in organizing the overall process into a workable schedule.

Another important part of preparing for the project was the gathering and compiling of demographic information concerning the Turner community and First Baptist Church of Turner. In doing so, I have come to see Turner as a unique community with many assets. In actuality a suburb of Kansas City, KS, Turner has the feel and atmosphere of a small town. The community is close knit and works together in many ways to make Turner even a better place. First Baptist Church of Turner is a unique church with many of its members living close to the church building. Many in the congregation are lifelong members of Turner and are strongly tied to the community. The demographics were helpful in seeing how FBCT reflects the community and how it does not. The history of the church offered a helpful reminder of the church's place in the community over many years.

Concerning methodology, the small group format worked well, but there are some lessons I have learned that are beneficial, not only in understanding this project, but also when planning future ministry in the congregation and community. It is important to remember that both information and experience are beneficial in the spiritual formation process. It is also important for effective learning to

take place a balance must be maintained between various aspects in the process. I have learned that these things can be achieved by applying the following principles.

First: an understanding of shalom can be taught, but the experience and expression of shalom cannot. The best that can be done is the facilitation of a place and space where the potential of experience and expression exist. Second: there are tensions that must be maintained in order for a spiritual formation process, such as this, to be effective. I believe that there are three tensions to be considered.

One: it must be both experiential and academic. Upon reflection, time spent defining and instructing the participants concerning basic formation terminology as well as proposed spiritual disciplines, would have greatly enhanced the process. I see this as a major weakness in the project.

Two: spontaneity must be balanced with structure. In an attempt to allow the participants as much freedom as possible to experience shalom, I sacrificed some structure and order that would have been beneficial to the participant.

Three: due to the lack of academics and structure, the expressive side of the project was not given equal attention. This does not mean that the participants did not gain a deeper understanding of what it means to express shalom in a spiritually formative way.

However, it does mean that opportunities were missed for them to have a much richer experience.

Foundation of the Project

The foundational icons of the project were the Communities of Shalom acrostic and the safaris. The acrostic offered something teachable and tangible that the participants could use as a tool in their search for shalom. Going out into the community in search of specific aspects of shalom, as defined by the acrostic, offered a valuable framework for the safaris. The shalom acrostic is also beneficial to me

as I continue my ministry in the Turner Community and in leading the congregation. The acrostic describes each thread of shalom offers guidance in my ministry of experiencing and expressing shalom.

What follows are some lessons learned in the threads:

S is for Systemic and Sustainable Change

Concerning change: unless change is systemic and sustainable, it is most times only a temporary fix. In other words, in most instances, the immediate symptoms are not the problem. A good example is First Baptist Church of Turner's recent restructuring of our benevolence ministries. In the past, due to our lack of expertise coupled with our strong desire to help those in need, we decided who to assist based on two criteria; our "gut" instincts concerning the legitimacy of the request and the availability of funds in our Easton Friendliness Fund. This resulted in addressing the symptoms with no systemic or sustainable change taking place.

Recently, because of a renewed effort at assessing our congregational assets (*Asset Based Congregational Development*), we restructured the ministry and began what is now called Caring Connections. We began to utilize the knowledge and skills of a church member whose occupation brings her into contact on a daily basis with those in need of financial and other sorts of assistance. She possesses the necessary skills to assess a request situation, determine real needs, and offer resources that offer change that is potentially systemic and sustainable.

Personally, this thread of shalom challenges me to be intentional, not only in my ministry, but also in my everyday living. It challenges me to stop and consider each moment—each interaction—and to look for shalom, as it exists and can be experienced, and, as it can be expressed and brought into existence. From a personal spiritual formation perspective, *systemic* and *sustainable* means permanent spiritual and emotional transformation within me that occurs through my deliberate spiritual practices of experiencing and expressing shalom.

The potential to experience and express shalom in ways that offer systemic, sustainable change exists in all kinds of situations. How I treat those with whom I come into contact—how I perceive situations and circumstances—how I experience nature—these things and more, I see as opportunities to experience and express shalom in ways that offer systemic and sustainable change.

H is for Healing, Health, and Wholeness

Another aspect of our new Caring Connections process is our Homeless Outreach ministry. In this ministry, members of the church donate food and supplies, go out weekly to visit with the homeless, and supply them with items that are helpful for life on the streets. We are also prepared to connect with them on an even deeper level by offering resources needed to help them get off the street.

This means sometimes sitting with them and making phone calls in order to find temporary shelter, which in turn, leads to other resources needed for their healing, health and wholeness. Other times it means driving them to appointments or helping them connect to services that they need. Most importantly, we are there to be their friend, to connect, and to care.

Personally, as I express healing, health, and wholeness to those in need, I find that many times I also experience that healing, health, and wholeness. While sitting and listening to their stories of brokenness and need for restoration, I am many times reminded of my own emotional and spiritual wounds that have not yet healed. In learning about, and offering resources to them, I sometimes learn something about myself—a little “aha” moment—that offers healing. I find that as I offer wholeness to others, I myself am also being restored.

A is for Asset Based Community Development This is another specific area of the Communities of Shalom acrostic that has been directly applied to the ministry of First Baptist Church of Turner. Churches have a tendency to develop programs based on the perceived needs of a community and then attempt to meet those needs. Many times, based on the assets of the congregation, they are not

equipped to carry out such programs and the church struggles and declines. I have come to believe that a better way is to develop ministry based on the assets within the congregation.

As I mentioned above, our Caring Connection ministry is a direct result of recognizing the skills and gifts present in a congregation member. By utilizing those skills, we are becoming much more effective helping those in need. Our Homeless Outreach is a direct result of listening to a member of the congregation who told me he knew where the homeless lived. As a result, we are presently making weekly contact with 30 to 40 friends who live in the street. The generosity and hospitality of our congregation enables us to keep our homeless friends supplied with snacks, blankets, gloves, tents and other needed items. As we have begun to develop our ministries based on congregational assets, we are becoming much more effective and having much more of an impact in our community.

Personally, this thread helps me experience shalom by keeping me aware of the many gifts of those around. It helps me be more intentional in looking for the “good” in family and friends, my church, and my community. Being aware of the shalom in them, makes it possible to experience shalom. As the thread encourages me to work at community development by looking for the assets in my community, I also am encouraged to consider the assets of family and friends.

Additionally, this thread helps me better express shalom by encouraging me to consider my own assets. What are my gifts? What are my talents? Knowing this helps me better offer shalom to those around me.

L is for Love for God, Self, and Neighbor

In Matthew 22:36-40, when asked, “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Love for God, self, and neighbor is really the foundation for following Jesus and without such love, shalom cannot truly be experienced or expressed. Recently, First Baptist Church of Turner has become very intentional in following Jesus. We have begun to study his teachings and are working to apply those teaching to our individual lives and to our life as a congregation. We have begun to practice not only coming to church on Sunday, but more importantly, being the church Monday through Saturday. Our ministry and outreach is based on practicing our love for God, self, and neighbor.

For me, this thread is of utmost importance to my ability to experience and express shalom. Shalom is experienced when I love God, love my neighbor, and love myself. There is a wholeness, and a healthiness and completeness when I act out of love. A strong adherence to this law of love causes me to see and to seek the Gospels as my primary source of direction as a follower of Jesus. With the teachings and the example of Jesus as my guide, I also express shalom by loving God, loving others, and loving myself.

O is for Organized for Direct Action

It's easy for a church to support other ministries. It is much harder for a congregation to take direct action and be directly involved. It seems to me that being organized for direct action makes for more impact on community through more effective ministry.

First Baptist Church of Turner has begun to organize for direct action. Both our Caring Connection and Homeless Outreach ministries are organized for immediate and continual connection and action. We are working hard within the congregation to encourage immediate and direct participation by tapping into the skills and assets of our members. For example, we have people with plumbing skills, heating and cooling skills, automotive repair skills, carpentry skills, and other talents and skills, who are directly involved in meeting the needs of our community and congregation.

I have also become involved in community organizations as a way of being more directly connected to those who are bringing about need change. One such organization is Share the Bear, which began as a 501c3 that offers college scholarships to Turner High School graduates. It has expanded its mission to housing and redevelopment in a lower income area of the Turner Community. Being a part of the planning and the work is a way for our church to be directly involved in the betterment of our community.

Personally, *organized for direct action* means finding the most direct and effective way to accomplish what needs to be done. It means taking the time to think something through and then to act rather than react. I experience shalom through direct action by becoming increasingly able to identify what is most important at the moment. I express shalom by offering the threads of shalom in the most direct means possible.

M is for Multicultural, Multifaith Collaboration

The Turner community is predominantly Caucasian, therefore, First Baptist Church of Turner is also predominantly Caucasian. FBCT reflects the cultural demographic of the Turner community. However, there are about 17 churches in Turner, as well as a Muslim group. This means that although The Turner community is not very multicultural, it is multifaith.

Multicultural, multifaith collaboration is probably the weak link in First Baptist Church of Turner's work of shalom. It's not that we are not open and willing, it's that this is simply an area where we need to be more intentional.

One idea would be the development of a Turner Ministerial Alliance This would be an organization made up of all the pastors of churches in the Turner Community. Such an alliance would work together concerning issues determined to be important by the alliance in conjunction with the community.

Another idea could be a multicultural gathering that would include all the cultures and faiths in the Turner area. It would include food, music, and other relevant cultural activities. I envision FBCT's parking lot being the location for this event. I imagine colors and smells and sounds that reflect the ethnicity of those involved. I imagine energy and excitement and the building of relationships and partnerships, this event could be centered around the planting of a Peace Pole in a community area of Turner.

For me, multicultural, multifaith collaboration is a natural outcome of loving God, self, and neighbor. When I love as Jesus asks, I find it easy—even exciting and stimulating—to build relationships with those from other cultures and faiths. I am experiencing and expressing shalom by building relationships with as many people from as many cultures as I can. None are off limits. I connect to learn and to be their friend, and I hope to begin to do a better job in collaborating with them in the offering of shalom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in spite of its shortcomings, I see the project as effective in that it did show that shalom can be experienced and expressed, and such experiences and expressions can be spiritually formative. It offers a basic framework for a much more comprehensive congregational process that can effectively provide a means for congregational development and growth with spiritual formation as its foundation.

Remembering that shalom as spiritual formation must be both experiential and academic, the development of spiritual formation terminology and proposed spiritual disciplines will greatly improve future formation processes in the church.

Also remembering that too much spontaneity takes away from needed structure, equal attention can be given to both the experiential and expressive aspects of shalom. This will lead to even a deeper understanding of what it means to experience and express shalom in a spiritually formative way. Such

lessons learned will be beneficial to the development of a spiritual formation process for the church, and will offer the potential for a much richer experience.

CHAPTER 7

APPLICATIONS OF LEARNINGS

Upon reflection, experiencing and expressing shalom as spiritual formation is both an individual and corporate process. It maybe that in addition to the shalom safaris, the participants could have also been introduced to spiritual disciplines that would've been beneficial and spiritually formative. For example, the ancient disciplines of *simplicity*, *silence*, and *solitude* would have been foundational to the reflective nature of experiencing shalom, and the corporate *ministries of mercy*, *advocacy*, and *community development* could have lended themselves well to shalom's active and expressive nature.

It may have been helpful to add a fourth introductory session that would have offered basic definitions and information about these specific disciplines. I think this would have been beneficial to the project and would have offered needed structure. It would also have facilitated a more intentional process of expressing shalom. This would have greatly strengthened the project and better prepared the participants. If I had it to do over again, the project outline might look something like this:

Part One: Basic Definitions and Information

- I. Introductory Terms
 - a. Spiritual Disciplines
 - b. Spiritual Formation
 - c. Spiritual Direction
- II. Experiential Disciplines
 - a. Simplicity
 - b. Silence

c. Solitude

III. Expressing Disciplines

a. Ministries of Mercy

b. Advocacy

c. Community Development

Part Two: The Safaris -

I. Gathering and Preparing

a. Discuss the practice of the following disciplines and how they relate to experiencing shalom

i. Simplicity

ii. Silence

iii. Solitude

b. Prepare for Safari

II. The Safari

III. Returning and Reflecting.

a. Reflect on safari experience and evaluate how shalom can be expressed through the following

i. Ministries of Mercy

ii. Advocacy

iii. Community Development

b. Challenge to practice experiencing and expressing shalom

These terms and disciplines are defined in the following way.

Part One: Basic Definitions and Information

I. Introductory Terms

There are three introductory terms concerning experiencing and expressing shalom; *spiritual disciplines*, *spiritual formation*, and *spiritual direction*. A well-developed formation process will spend ample time covering each of these terms, in order to offer the participants a foundational understanding needed in preparation for the safari experiences. I will now go over my thoughts concerning each term.

a. Spiritual Disciplines

In applying the experience and expression of shalom as spiritual formation, I would define spiritual discipline as *a field of study accompanied by intentional, experiential and expressive practices that draws the individual toward completeness, wholeness, and health while facilitating the offering of completeness, wholeness, and health to the community around us.*

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun defines *spiritual disciplines* as “intentional practices, relationships and experiences that [give] people space in their lives to ‘keep company’ with Jesus.”¹ It is important to understand that a spiritually formative life must be made up of intentional practices. Richard Foster defines spiritual disciplines as practices that “[call] us to move beyond surface living into the depths.” He says they “urge us to be the answer to a hollow world.”² Experiencing and expressing shalom can only occur if one is living out specific practices in a persistent way. We search, we study, and we practice those disciplines which lead to the experience and the expression of completeness, wholeness, and health.

b. Spiritual Formation

1. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 17.

2. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: the Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 1.

Spiritual disciplines lead to *spiritual formation*. In other words, consistently engaging in intentional, experiential and expressive practices will cause one to form and develop spiritually.

Concerning *spiritual formation*, M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. says in the Christian tradition, it is “a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.”³ This means that the evidence of spiritual formation occurs when our inward experiences of shalom become outward expressions of shalom. Such formation is vital and necessary to the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of those engaged in the daily endeavors of community development and transformation.

Michael Christensen writes of inner-city activists suffering from broken relationships and “[living] out their lives doing unconscious penance.” His observation is similar to that of Walter Wink, who speaks of the danger of being “unprotected by prayer”—and I would add, unprotected by spiritual direction and spiritual discipline—and of “our social activism [running] the danger of becoming [only] self-justifying good works.”⁴ Christensen writes, “Wounded healers can only heal others’ wounds as they offer to God their own.” He states, “What happens in you is as important as what God does through you.”⁵ In retrospect, for shalom to be spiritually formative in both the giver and the receiver, such information and definitions would have been very helpful in the project and should be included in whatever process is developed for congregational growth at First Baptist Church of Turner.

Last, it is important to remember that for spiritual formation to take place there must be some sort of consistent directive process coupled with a consistent practice of relevant spiritual disciplines. In other words, spiritual discipline through spiritual direction leads to spiritual formation.

c. Spiritual Direction

3. Ibid., 15.

4. Michael J. Christensen, *City Streets City People: A Call for Compassion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 61.

5. Ibid.

There are various terms used to describe *spiritual direction*. Some refer to spiritual directors, those who we go to specifically for direction and guidance. Others refer to soul friends, or spiritual companions. Whereas the term spiritual director usually refers to more of teacher or mentor, these terms refer to friends. If one were on a safari, the spiritual director would be the guide, and soul friends or spiritual companions would be our fellow safari mates.

The Nouwen Legacy website offers the following definition of *spiritual direction*. In what the site refers to as Nouwen's "characteristic simplicity," he "narrows his definition to 'direction given to people in their relationship with God.'" The site continues by stating, "A spiritual director...is 'a mature fellow Christian...from whom we can expect prayerful guidance in our constant struggle to discern God's active presence in our lives.'" Simply stated, "...spiritual direction involves people com[ing] together to listen to the direction of the Spirit."⁶ To further clarify the definition and purpose of spiritual direction, it must be understood that

The spiritual journey is never meant to be a solitary process. We all need sacred companions along the way. Whatever the term of preference is employed – be it spiritual counsel, spiritual guidance/mentoring, soul friendship, or spiritual direction - we do not want to miss the point: they are all intended means and processes for our soul care and spiritual formation.⁷

Such definition lends itself well to the idea of a structured and experiential process through which the church can experience and express shalom.

II. Experiential Disciplines

6. http://www.nouwenlegacy.com/community.php#spiritual_direction, accessed 8-1-14.

7. Ibid.

For shalom to be experienced, we must take time to look inward. In order to experience completeness, wholeness, and health, we must first be aware of the brokenness and dis-ease within us. Michael Christensen writes, “The garden of God within me is more important than ministry’s beck and call.” He says, “As [we] continue examining [our] temptations and motivations, [work] through personal life issues, and [offer ourselves] to God in quiet devotion, [our hearts are] purified, [our lives] healed, and [our] friendship with God secure.”⁸

He refers to Elizabeth O’Connor’s book, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*, by defining this “reflective, devotional, ‘being’ aspect of Christianity” as the “journey inward.”⁹ With this in mind, let me offer three individual disciplines, *simplicity*, *silence*, and *solitude*. I believe these three disciplines to be beneficial to the experiencing of shalom as spiritual formation.

a. Simplicity

Simplicity is the consistent process of keeping life simple through attitude and action.

Life has a way of becoming cluttered and complicated. Society in America defines success by the amount of things we possess, as well as the expensiveness of such things. As we get caught up in the grasping and attaining of things, it becomes necessary for there to be a way available for us to simplify our lives. The discipline of *simplicity* is necessary for experiencing the completeness, wholeness, and health of shalom.

According to Richard Foster, “Simplicity is freedom. Duplicity is bondage. Simplicity brings joy and balance. Duplicity brings anxiety and fear.”¹⁰ Bondage, anxiety, and fear are not conducive to experiencing shalom. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun says, “Simplicity creates margins and spaces and openness in our lives...It offers us the leisure of tasting the present

8. Michael J. Christensen, *City Streets City People: A Call for Compassion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 223-224.

9. *Ibid.*, 226.

10. Foster, 79.

moment.” She says, “Simplicity asks us to let go of the tangle of wants so we can receive the simple gifts of life that cannot be taken away.” She says, “Simplicity invites us into these daily pleasures that can open us to God, who is present in them all.”¹¹

It would seem the practice of *simplicity* is foundational to the experiencing of shalom as a spiritually formative process in our lives. It might even be that without a consistent process of keeping life simple through attitude and action, other disciplines, such as *silence* and *solitude*, shalom cannot be adequately practiced or experienced.

b. Silence

The discipline of *silence* is more than simply the absence of noise. The discipline of *silence* is *an inward attitude of quietness that facilitates calm in the midst of internal and external unrest*. Calhoun writes, “Silence challenges our cultural addiction to amusement, words, music, advertising, noise, alarms and voices.” She says, “Silence offers a way of paying attention to the Spirit of God and what [the Spirit] brings to the surface of our souls.”¹² In a very real way, this discipline leads to what songwriters, Simon and Garfunkel, refer to as *the sound of silence*.

M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. defines silence as “the radical reversal of our cultural tendencies...a reversal of the whole possessing, controlling, grasping dynamic of trying to maintain control of our own existence.” He continues by stating

If used regularly...[silence] will gradually awaken us to the multiple layers of controlling, grasping “noise” in our lives; the defensive postures by which we justify our control of people and circumstances; the attack dynamics by which we extend and maintain our possession and control of others and our world; the indulgent habits by which we grasp things and others for ourselves; the manipulative practices by which we

11. Calhoun, 75.

12. Ibid., 108.

inflict our will on the world; and especially the ways in which we attempt to use God to support and justify these structures.¹³

Silence offer a way to quiet the chatter within and without. It's in these times of quiet that we truly begin to hear those important things that get drowned out by the noise. Through the practice of *simplicity* and *silence*, we prepare our hearts to be open to receive the healing wholeness and completeness of shalom.

c. Solitude

The third suggested individual discipline is *solitude*. Richard Foster says, "Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude." He writes, "Our fear of being alone drives us to noise and crowds." However, "...loneliness or clutter our not our only alternatives. We can cultivate an inner solitude and silence that sets us free from loneliness and fear." Foster says, "Loneliness is inner emptiness," but, "solitude is inner fulfillment." He continues by saying that "solitude is more of a state of mind and heart than it is a place."¹⁴

Silence and *solitude* are similar to one another and are intimately connected. I would suggest that one cannot truly be experienced without the other, that they are, in reality, two sides of the same coin. Mulholland says,

We tend to think of solitude as simply being alone...however, solitude is [about]...beginning to grasp the deep inner dynamics of our being that make us that grasping, controlling, manipulative, person; beginning to face our brokenness, our distortion, our darkness; and beginning to offer ourselves to God at those points.

Mulholland goes on to state, "Solitude is not simply drawing away from others and being alone with God...it is being who we are with God and acknowledging who we are to ourselves and to God."¹⁵ Such a practice of *solitude* offers a process that develops authenticity

13. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 137.

14. Foster, 96.

15. Mulholland, Jr., 15.

and allow us to more freely experience the shalom of God and to share such shalom with those around us.

III. Expressive Disciplines

For the church to be the church, it must be the church Monday through Saturday, not just on Sunday. What this means for us at First Baptist Church of Turner is, we choose to gather on Sunday in order to prepare for the ministry on Monday through Saturday. We strive to minister through *ministries of mercy, advocacy, and community development*. I see these three areas of ministry in the community as expressions of shalom.

Brian McLaren, in *A New Kind of Christianity*, writes, “the quest to heal what we have so disastrously broken, the quest to unify and liberate what we’ve tragically divided and conquered, the quest to rediscover a larger and more beautiful whole rather than pit part against part in deadly conflict.”¹⁶ This is the work of the church on the emerging frontier, and this is the expression of shalom.

Mark Gornik reminds us that “to share as neighbors and friends in the everyday experiences of life, to invest as neighbors and friends in the development of others is both the extension and foundation of shalom.”¹⁷ A successful congregational process would mean that the participants’ experiencing of shalom through the spiritually formative disciplines of *simplicity, silence and solitude* would lead to the expressing of shalom through the outward and corporate acts of *mercy, advocacy, and community development*.

Robert Linthicum says “we are called by God to practice our faith by working for social justice and shalom...we are to undertake *ministries of mercy*...we are to be *advocates* for the powerless...”

16. Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 232.

17. Mark R. Gornik, 115.

and, we are to engage in the ministry of *community development*...¹⁸ A basic introduction to the each of these would've have been beneficial to the success of the project and will be included in our future spiritual formation process. It is my assertion that each of these, practiced intentionally and properly, are spiritually formative, corporate acts of shalom. I will now offer a brief definition of each discipline as it relates to expressing shalom as spiritual formation.

I. Ministries of Mercy

Linthicum says, “We are to undertake *ministries of mercy*...¹⁹ The praxis of shalom—the active, expressive nature of shalom—is summed up in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. When asked by the Jewish religious leaders of his day, what is the most important commandment, he quoted the Hebrew scripture. He said, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”²⁰

It is important to remember that we are to be about loving God and loving others—caring for others—in the same way we love and care for ourselves. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” He makes it clear in Matthew 25 that it is those that act—those that feed the hungry—give drink to the thirsty—take in the stranger—clothe the naked—care for the sick, visit those in prison—it is those who truly express shalom and who are ushered in—along with those to whom they have shown mercy—into the Beloved Community of God.

Shalom is expressed when we, the church, offer *ministries of mercy* to those in need.

a. Advocacy

18. Robert Linthicum, 93.

19. Ibid.

20. Mark 12:30-31, New Living Translation.

Advocacy is the act of standing **with** and **for** those who cannot stand for themselves. It is the offering of what is needed for a person to become self-sufficient and able to stand on their own. Cecil Williams in his book, *No Hiding Place*, says, "...if religion means anything at all, it means you put your life where you say you're going to put it and do what you have to do instead of just talking about it all the time."²¹ My friend, Tamara Witte says, "Thinking of advocacy as a spiritual discipline frees it from that category of things we know we should be about but never seem to have or make time for." She states, "It's moving it to a sacred place where it belongs." This is Michael Christensen's description of *advocacy*: first, he writes of *client advocacy*, which he defines as "[standing] beside and [speaking] up for the powerless." Second, he defines *public policy advocacy* as "[standing] up and [speaking] up for kingdom principles and values in the face of unjust systems and oppression." Dennis Jacobsen defines *advocacy* as being "at the side of the one in need." According to Jacobsen, advocacy is "[speaking] on behalf of the powerless." It's "entering into the maze of systems" and taking a stand for and with the helpless, the hopeless, and the hurting. He goes on to say that "advocates with savvy who know their way through systems are a great resource," but he warns that "such advocates at best bring about exceptions to the rule." He warns that without community and congregational organizing, advocacy alone falls short.²²

Advocacy as an active and corporate discipline of expressing shalom will greatly facilitate the experiencing of shalom in those to whom it is offered. Practicing *advocacy* as a spiritual discipline should lead to spiritual formation, and must be about standing for and speaking for those unable to stand or speak for themselves, as well as, standing for and speaking for principles and values that facilitate justice and shalom.

21. Cecil Williams with Rebecca Laird, *No Hiding Place: Empowerment and Recovery for Our Troubled Communities* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 2.

22. Dennis A. Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 20.

b. Community Development

Community development as a spiritual discipline may seem slightly odd, but let's consider the possibility from the perspective of *community development* as an intentional expression of shalom.

Community development is the act of working toward making our community a better, safer place to live and work. It is about building on the assets of a community in order to strengthen it and make it a place where completeness, wholeness, and health are experienced.

Gary Green and Anna Haines, in their work, *Asset Building and Community Development*, define *community development* as “a planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life.”²³ In *Building a People of Power*, Robert Linthicum defines this as a “ministry of practice to which God’s people are called...the ministry of *community development*—that is, working with and mobilizing the poor to provide needed community services for them.”²⁴ John Perkins helps further define the concept of community development as ministry, as well as, spiritually formative. He says, “What separates Christian community development from other forms of social change is that we believe that changing a life or changing a community is ultimately a spiritual issue.”²⁵ Practiced from this perspective, *ministries of mercy, advocacy, and community development* all become both spiritually formative and transformative for the individual and the community.

One persistent problem in life is the constant encroachment of schedules and other pressures. The pursuit of more stuff—the complications and pressures of a frantic and frenzied schedule—the stress and anxiety of over-extended finances—the dread of looming deadlines and due dates and expectations—these things, and others like them, can rob us of our potential to recognize and

23. Gary Paul Green and Anna Haines, *Asset Building and Community Development* (Sage Publications, 2012), 9.

24. Linthicum, 93.

25. John Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 80.

experience shalom. Basic definitions and information, along with intentional opportunities to practice spiritual disciplines is much needed in a spiritual formation process.

Adding the introductory session enables the safari participants to better engage in the experiential and expressive nature of the safaris. Time spent considering *simplicity*, *silence*, and *solitude* better prepare the participants to experience shalom during the safari. This introductory session also facilitates an opportunity to practice the disciplines in between the safaris.

Adding this introductory session makes the reflection time after each safari much more effective. Taking time to consider how *ministries of mercy*, *advocacy*, and *community development* can be expressed as an offering of shalom adds much impact to the safaris. Such an adjustment to safari process solves the issue of expressing shalom being a weak area in the spiritual formation process.

I have learned that such an approach to the safaris greatly enhances them. It is helpful for the safari participants to understand that practicing shalom as spiritual formation in an experiential and expressive way involves the practice of spiritual disciplines, such as those mentioned. Such disciplines are practiced by first becoming aware of attitudes and activities that duplicate, complicate, and aggravate our lives. Equally helpful, is understanding our need for spiritual disciplines that facilitate a grounding and centering in shalom while engaging in regular self-reflection and honest appraisal of our condition—spiritually, emotionally, and even physically. Finally, the offering of specific disciplines are beneficial in the expressing of shalom.

Part Two: The Safaris

Offering the introductory session of basic definitions and introductory terms better prepares the participants for the safaris. With an understanding of basic spiritual formations terms along with helpful information concerning those terms, the participants are much better equipped to go playfully into the community in search elements of shalom as offered in the Communities of Shalom acrostic.

This means that the safari structure stays the same but the experience is greatly enhanced because of the added introductory session. The safari experience is as follows.

I. Gathering and Preparing

- a. Discuss the practice of the following disciplines and how they relate to experiencing shalom
 - i. Simplicity
 - ii. Silence
 - iii. Solitude
- b. Prepare for Safari

The safari begins with the participants gathering and preparing for the adventure.

Because of the introductory session, the participants have been encouraged to experiment with the experiential disciplines of *simplicity*, *silence*, and *solitude*. They are encouraged to share their experiences in practicing these disciplines. Opportunities are offered before departing to experience the disciplines as a way of preparing both heart and mind for the adventure ahead.

II. The Safari

The safari experience is most effective as an adventure. It should be kept playful and explorative. It is time spent getting to know our community and neighborhood while also searching for shalom in all its aspects: systemic and sustainable change; healing, health, harmony, and wholeness; asset based community development; love for God, self, and neighbor; organized for direct action; and, multicultural, multifaith collaboration.

As I stated early in chapter four, a safari must be well planned and those on the safari must be prepared and ready to meet the demands of the adventure, as well as be alert to the signs that what they are searching for is close at hand. The introductory session mentioned above can be thought of as the

needed safari training. It builds spiritual and mental stamina and offers the needed tools to persevere throughout the safari experience.

III. Returning and Reflecting

- a. Reflect on safari experience and evaluate how shalom can be expressed through the following:
 - i. Ministries of Mercy
 - ii. Advocacy
 - iii. Community Development
- b. Challenge to practice experiencing and expressing shalom

Upon return, the safari participants take time to debrief and discuss the experience. A very important part of this process is to not only to reflect on what elements of shalom have been discovered, but to also determine how the disciplines of *ministries of mercy*, *advocacy*, and *community development* can best be expressed by both the individual participant and the congregation. This was the weak piece in the project. The intentional introduction of specific experiential and expressive disciplines corrects that weakness. Corrected in this way, the safari experience is greatly enhanced and lends itself well to both community development and congregational growth.

Conclusion

As I conclude this thesis, let me reiterate what I have learned throughout this process. I have learned there is a primordial spark of divinity that is foundational and universal. I believe that this spark is called by many names in many cultures and religions. I refer to it as shalom. I have learned that shalom can be experienced and expressed in a spiritually formative way, and I have come to believe that this spiritual formation process of experiencing and expressing shalom can be instrumental in this time of transition and massive change within the Church in America.

Understanding that the concepts of God are rapidly changing, I have learned that God must be presented and understood from a panentheistic perspective that represents this ever-existing spark of Divinity within all of creation. I believe this spark draws creation toward the healing wholeness and completeness of shalom. Seeing God and shalom from this perspective allows for me a more organic and holistic approach to ministry. With God in all things and all things in God, I have learned to be more aware of opportunities for ministry in which shalom can be experienced and expressed.

Furthermore, I believe that a congregational understanding of shalom, as well as the experiencing and expressing of shalom, offers a solution to the declining participation and lack of interest in both traditional and emergent Christianity. I believe that a church does its best ministry when grounded in disciplines and practices that facilitate an experiential and expressive connection with this panentheistic God.

I have learned that through employing the ancient concept of shalom, spiritual formation can be reimagined and reconstructed into new contexts, including both the traditional church and the emergent frontier. Disciplines that facilitate experiencing shalom lead to practices that express shalom. I believe that such praxis coupled with congregational ministry development based on its assets lead to transformation and renewal.

I have learned that a traditional church can be both an emerging and frontier church. Although some emergents suggest the emergent frontier is found only outside the traditional church, I believe the emergent frontier also runs through the traditional church. The answer does not lie in whether a church is traditional or emergent, rather it is through a continuing process of spiritual formation and disciplines that a vibrant and transformational Christianity thrives. I have learned that this can occur through the tangible experience and expression of this ancient Hebrew concept of *shalom*.

Through the use of shalom safaris and an intentional, spiritually formative process, it is my belief that the project was effective in discovering the potential of shalom as spiritual formation. As I

begin to apply lessons I have learned to my congregational setting, I see First Baptist Church of Turner becoming more active and vibrant. I see holistic, organic ministry springing up from the skills, talents, and gifts already in the congregation. My hope is that out of this project, in time FBCT will develop an intentional spiritual formation process that will facilitate even more spiritual development and growth.

Shalom, salaam, shanti...

Experiencing and Expressing Shalom

Focus Group Questionnaire

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Drew University**

Steven R. Neal

1

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

I. Understanding Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

original meaning to me was
a Jewish greeting or fare well - an
offer of peace at that (or now) time.

I have realized that "shalom" & many
other "words" are much deeper than
surface, therefore making the meaning
deeper for me.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

1. continued discussions
2. "focused" awareness in experience
& discussion
3. awareness away from our discussion
& it resides in a group.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

II. Experiencing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed? 4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of experiencing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

to experience shalom (as a Christian)
needs to be intentional - ie, instead
of just saying "hello/good-bye"
and someone do "have a blessed day"
a pay more attention to surroundings
of people & "think" about what
is going on around you rather
than "go through the motions."
(appreciate more)

What caused such change, or lack of change?

1. focused awareness
2. a more focused prayer life

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

III. Expressing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of expressing shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of expressing shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of expressing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

my understanding has deepened in the realization that we can express Shalom through the love of God to others - He designed us that way! It is man that changed that - Also the reason, in our human world, that we do not always show the love of God to others -

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Discussion + effort on my part to express "shalom" - or peace to others - & being aware of it 24-7!

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

IV. Shalom Safari One: Turner Health Fair

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I have been to "health" fairs & other types, but did not truly "think" of what to expect other than "furniture" displays. - We had enough discussion ahead of time that I went in w/ my notepad, ready to write "where" or "if" I saw an experiential Shalom -

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

1. I rated the experience "5" & the expectation a "3" because I had not thought enough about it ahead of time - the "how" factor I suppose. I found that Turner's community (these three) were very caring, supportive, & I was very pleased ~~to~~ at what we experienced & saw. There is a lot of "Shalom" in Turner -
2. Very good first Shalom experience
w/ many contacts & many different aspects.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

V. Shalom Safari Two: Turner Shopping Area

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

^{Diagon}
^{at} ~~I~~ I wasn't sure, even after the 1st safari, how a trip to a shopping center could express shalom (or) ^{of} ~~sent~~ to my surprise, there were both everywhere. The act "act" of shalom was in the "barred" windows as we drove in -- to me; that was sad, for a lack of other words -- no peace in that. When we saw shalom in a father and the culture with little girls in a grocery store & his love for them showed, he showed smiles in people we didn't know - that a man held a door for me - being w/ church family members (on a mission) was a sense of togetherness.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5 after ^{cont.} below

How were they, or how were they not met?

cont. - our meal together represented church family w/ all ethnic groups in the area. It felt we had a special bond between us -

my expectations were more than met.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VI. Shalom Safari Three: Turner Community Garden

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

From all I had heard, the community garden of Turner has been something very special. It was my 1st time to visit, & even in the early spring w/ no growth, my imagination went wild. Even today, I find myself turning my head as I drive by to see what new is going on. Having helped put a prayer garden together, at another church created a bit of excitement to "redeem" the front of F.H. Turner. The shalom started with volunteers like Calvin + Larry who have a love for God's nature, especially Calvin.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

Seeing the potential of what the garden results will be & knowing how many will come together to make that possible is shalom.

I enjoyed it & recognize God's shalom for us in areas like the community garden!

(Goah - hope you can read this!)

7

NOTE CHANGES IN QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale below, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience

1. How would you rate the Turner Health Fair Safari? 4

Why? good overall representation of shalom
from many

2. How would you rate the Turner Shopping Area Safari? 4

Why? shalom represented in many different
areas - realization - to find shalom -
we need to be aware of the potential.

3. How would you rate the Turner Community Garden Safari? 5

Why? my favorite w/ my personal love for
the outside & nature - God always provides
a place to find peace & quiet.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

4. How would you rate the overall project experience? 4-5

Why? Did not have the ^{planned} opportunity to work
for Shalom before the project start
increased my awareness level
enormously -

5. How would you rate the Playing 4 Change videos? 4

Why? especially like the groups all coming
together at the same time joining in
to complete something as good as a video -
I liked it -
especially Brenda Elliott (who I
remembered later)

6. How would you rate the Annie Allen Shalom video? 4

Why? another
good example of togetherness for
a common purpose

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

7. How would you rate the project handouts and information? 4-5

Why? very clear - thought through - easy to
follow - very thorough - I can't think
of anything lacking -

8. What worked? all things seemed to work & seemed
to pull together -

discussion among us was helpful to me

9. What didn't work? I didn't really see anything
negative - all were new & different adventures

10. What needs to be changed or discarded? I can't think of any

11. What needs to be added? Can't think of anything new -
seemed to be covered well

12. Additional comments or suggestions _____
overall good experience
not sure if helpful or not but
We, as a group, never discussed how we
thought we could bring Shalom to
our church personally -
most don't even know what we did

VIII. Final Reflections

The stated purpose of this project was the development of a spiritual formation process which can be used to help First Baptist Church of Turner experience and express shalom in the Turner Community.

1. What now? Offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation. my opinion only

that the church of Turner will need to be aware of what we did
& at least find part of what we (our group) feel in order
to express shalom intentionally to the community.

a possible (or whenever) retreat w/ shalom as focus
isn't at all bad as at retreat etc.

every my handwriting got good
but -

Printed Name	<u>Joyce E. Miller</u>
Signature	<u>Joyce Miller</u>
Date	<u>5/13/13</u>

Experiencing and Expressing Shalom

Focus Group Questionnaire

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Drew University**

Steven R. Neal

1

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

I. Understanding Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of shalom? 1
2. How has your understanding of shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I look for spiritual & emotional change
11. Healing, trust, harmony and relations
I would like community development
2. Love for kids and neighbors
3. Organizing for social action
10. Multicultural/multifield and abolition
Need for change - I see more community involvement
I look for what could be improved or build upon.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Observing - Experiencing - Focus
Where I just passed by and never gave them thought. Now
I look and see and ask questions
Shalom meant "hell" spoken. Now I see it differently

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

II. Experiencing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom? 2
2. How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed? 4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of experiencing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

When I look at each of the words and ^{meanings} what the Bible represents, it gives me ^{different} ^{insights} & causes change and I appreciate the growth over the last few sessions more and you can see the ^{need} ^{more} clearly

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Education - addressing and experiencing change. Also to see it gain - it's about the fellowship and sharing that is necessary. It causes change. The community needs to work together.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

III. Expressing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of expressing shalom? 1
2. How has your understanding of expressing shalom changed? 3/4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of expressing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

The idea was new to me. My own knowledge has
deepened during this project. We need to look for peace
working together - hard work and a well laid out plan is
needed before proceeding. Need to meet the needs of the people
within the area you are working with. The means available

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Simply the education found during this project.
Even though I ^{appreciated} shalom as a child - I didn't
fully understand what it was shalom.

4

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

IV. Shalom Safari One: Turner Health Fair

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

The program took us the building & demonstrated people who
available. Learned there were no money or services for
organized - lower - fair. That even will extend.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

I saw business - circles - people working together - people
wanting to help - in great scarcity of health & ^{economically} representation
I gave & supply information & cost. There are blood donation
as well as hearing & eye vision available.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

V. Shalom Safari Two: Turner Shopping Area

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I had none. I wonder about the Medicine Food and
wonder about what to order we had to eat it

I was not fully prepared to experience Shalom -
but it didn't take long to identify it. It was all
about us - we didn't have different business - accommodating
people and those that went out of their way to be
friendly.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

I was well organized simple gathering area. The tables were clean
Some were closed - some out of business. One store had heavy security.
Variety of eating places suitable to ^{the} ^{type} of development and the needs
of the people. Shopping and communication with some ^{hand} ^{held} ^{device}
for use. Well focused eyes and thoughts. We ^{now} ^{know} ^{better}, ^{friendly} ⁱⁿ
good gathering with many different kinds of foods I looked at or
went into all the stores.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VI. Shalom Safari Three: Turner Community Garden

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

To see a small vegetable garden along a city street block with small rows identified by the individuals. With some more labor some of our some looking; well as help on organization. Lack of water in/ was a problem.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

The garden is almost like a small community park with table chairs - walkway - grow house - and chickens. A trail is in the beginning stages with a full row of the walkway, after the area is cleared. You can see the hard work of these workers in front grounds. The water supply and people of the community develop the area. This is an area against the problem of a peaceful place. ~~that~~ there is a chance not to enjoy. This also involved a partnership of the church to organize the "green" area & the partnership with the 2-week arts & craft program started at the church.

7

NOTE CHANGES IN QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale, give an answer for each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience

1. How would you rate the Turner Health Fair Safari? 4

Why? I saw people in all professions serving the community
of Turner. I was impressed with the Turner Recreation Center
in the organization skills that are displayed.

2. How would you rate the Turner Shopping Area Safari? 4

Why? I saw the best only in the area because. The people had
no parking problem. I felt safe in the area. Everything was clean
and green and on the ground. people were being so friendly.

3. How would you rate the Turner Community Garden Safari? 5

Why? I could see the development later. The yard was
impressive and pleasant. The area is a good place for
children and adults. There is a nice walking trail. The
trail is fenced the railroad tracks will have a heavy duty
gate. I liked the location.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
 As the scale shows, answer each question below

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

4. How would you rate the overall project experience? 4

Why? I saw 3 different projects through Shalom again.

What a difference.

5. How would you rate the Playing 4 Change videos? 3/4

Why? In the beginning I could not relate video 4 to program.

I have a hearing problem - which I think is our worst

Communication after video gave me some understanding

The best was the same at random over all areas therefore

System could be effective.

6. How would you rate the Annie Allen Shalom video? 3/4

Why? A problem in understanding - Cause is probably

lack of hearing exactly what was being said.

I would probably benefit from a second showing

(3.7)

$$\begin{array}{r} 3.7 \\ 3 \overline{)11} \\ \underline{9} \\ 20 \\ \underline{18} \\ 20 \end{array}$$

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, mark each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

7. How would you rate the project handouts and information? 5

Why? Access to information. Able to see what Project Planning
entailed. If we are in good luck, the future can
be beautiful, peaceful and in line with God. I think spiritual
formation can be experienced and expressed. However, how
that relation God creation and humanity if we work at it.

8. What worked? read different business cases

Reading the submitted material. Some people were
going to group decisions. Some time was given
to discussion (very important). Partnership development

9. What didn't work? Everything had some value

10. What needs to be changed or discarded? I think some roles

could be gained by visiting the residential area to see how
people live and the "conditions"
which planning could be of ^{value} there.

11. What needs to be added? Another session ~~later~~ and this idea
can be presented to the church in an acceptable manner

12. Additional comments or suggestions Try with a positive-
message to involve everyone in and outside the church
to determine the need/want and then work together to
achieve this - want to challenge

VIII. Final Reflections

The stated purpose of this project was the development of a spiritual formation process which can be used to help First Baptist Church of Turner experience and express shalom in the Turner Community.

1. What now? Offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation. _____

clearly define what is desired/needed and then define process for victory. let the people know how important they are for the success of the identified project - there are three things being careful that "some" do not take control and make other feel of "outsider". Show individual attention for others. Really care - not just for me, you.

Printed Name Mary L Robinson

Signature Mary L Robinson Date 5/11/12

Experiencing and Expressing Shalom

Focus Group Questionnaire

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Drew University**

Steven R. Neal

1

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

I. Understanding Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I have appreciated the experience of being involved in this project. We were given a basis of knowledge to begin with thru the sermon series you did earlier.
I liked the portions of the Bible that have been used talking about shalom

What caused such change, or lack of change?

all of the portions of the experience - both in the building & out in community have been helpful

2

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

II. Experiencing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of experiencing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I have been more aware of experiencing throughout the week as I deal with situations. The acoustic did help remind me of the different ways to look at shalom. The trip to the strip mall helped me think thru values of communities and things that block the experience of shalom.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

The trips out in community as a group were helpful.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

III. Expressing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of expressing shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of expressing shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of expressing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I thought about the expression of shalom a lot because of some of the challenges of this semester. I have wanted better to try to have some glimpse of what shalom is thru me in situations with problem families, my own family situations, as well as out in community. My previous thought process of shalom has deepened.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

This project was very helpful. I was also glad you suggested the Bruggeman book Journey to the Common Good + Spring Creek Benedictine spirituality added to the experience

4

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

IV. Shalom Safari One: Turner Health Fair

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I wanted to get to know community resources that I could have available to share with others. I know more about community resources on the missouri side.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

This was very helpful. I had conversations with people that led to further conversations. Connections were built and there will be more community involvement in summer arts programs as a result.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

V. Shalom Safari Two: Turner Shopping Area

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I was looking forward to this event because the night before had taken a woman to get groceries and looked at how that grocery store had put all the cheap food in one section - dividing the haves from the have nots. Wanted to see how this shopping area was set up.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

Some things went thru my mind as I was there. What types of services are provided? How does owner of property get new businesses & does owner try to attract businesses to meet needs or just to pay bills. I honestly struggled the most with this safari and the group. I felt like a couple group members and I were at such different places that I went my own way for a bit.

6

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VI. Shalom Safari Three: Turner Community Garden

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I have not been to the garden even though I had heard it mentioned often. I was surprised it was as big as it is. I had hoped to make some connections with garden people and then invite them to participate in summer arts program.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

As a result of visiting that day, I have met with three other garden people at different days that will be helping with summer program. One person suggested we get involved with a lady from UCC extension office for working - nutrition class. It is fun seeing how one thing can lead to further connections - so special when that happens.

7

NOTE CHANGES IN QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Terrible 2 – Bad 3 – OK 4 – Good 5 – Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience

1. How would you rate the Turner Health Fair Safari? 5

Why? People were friendly. Everyone I spoke to seemed interested in doing things to improve the community. A variety of services were represented.

2. How would you rate the Turner Shopping Area Safari? 5

Why? I have looked at other shopping areas differently now.

3. How would you rate the Turner Community Garden Safari? 5

Why? Positive connections occurred.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, or write your request on below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

7. How would you rate the project handouts and information? _____

Why? I am glad to have the bibliography.
When I can find a few moments to read
something extra I might look at a couple more
of the books. I did read a lot of the 2 small
groups books. The shalom exercise was helpful.

8. What worked? Using this as a group was
good

9. What didn't work? I would have enjoyed reading
some of the other books during the process
rather than getting your bibliography towards
the end.

10. What needs to be changed or discarded? I can't think of
anything that should be discarded

11. What needs to be added? _____

12. Additional comments or suggestions _____

In the past at Ruby Ave. I was involved
in SHALOM activities - got different groups
working together meeting needs of people
in community. I did not have the
knowledge of Jeremiah 29 or Isaiah 65
then. I am so thankful that I have
been challenged to grow in so many
ways. Understanding the Bible a bit
better ~~know~~ how greatly deepened my
ability to experience and express Shalom.

VIII. Final Reflections

The stated purpose of this project was the development of a spiritual formation process which can be used to help First Baptist Church of Turner experience and express shalom in the Turner Community.

1. What now? Offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation. _____

Several people within the middle adult and also older adult age groups have mentioned desiring to begin small group studies. Maybe some of this could be topics at new small group program at FBCT

Printed Name	<u>Cindy Peterson</u>
Signature	<u>Cindy Peterson</u> Date <u>5/6/13</u>

Experiencing and Expressing Shalom

Focus Group Questionnaire

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Drew University**

Steven R. Neal

1

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

i. **Understanding Shalom**

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of shalom changed? 4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

My understanding of Shalom was just peace for Jewish people. I now know that I can spread shalom by my actions, my attitude and my treatment of others. Creating Shalom is a very rewarding action for me. It also can be found in peaceful surroundings, (gardens, etc). It can be found in music, and love.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Watching how people treat each other, being more aware of my surroundings, and learning how to look for it.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

II. Experiencing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom? 2
2. How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed? 4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of experiencing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I am more aware and focused on what
can cause me to experience Shalom. I can
experience this with music, babies and
the simple things in life. Taking time to
really focus on the beauty and spreading
that around me.

Gratitude

What caused such change, or lack of change?

better understanding of the meaning of
Shalom also better understanding of
how to lean on and trust in God.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

III. Expressing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of expressing shalom? 2
2. How has your understanding of expressing shalom changed? 4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of expressing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I think expressing Shalom is not as easy as it should be. Peoples attitudes and bad moods can make it difficult. But, knowing that God is with me, I try to always have a cheerful word or encouraging word for everyone. It gives me a peace in my heart to use the gifts God gave me to show Shalom and Gods love to all.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Being more aware of what Shalom really is and a deep desire to share it with the world, one small corner at a time.



Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

IV. Shalom Safari One: Turner Health Fair

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I am sorry I missed it

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? _____

How were they, or how were they not met?

5

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

V. Shalom Safari Two: Turner Shopping Area

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

I really did not have any expectations.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 3

How were they, or how were they not met?

This outing made me see the things that could block my way to Shalom. But it also made me aware of some positive things there. The blocks that I saw was bars on windows, and litter. The good things I saw were people waving & smiling at strangers. A father with 4 or 5 small kids shopping. People responding to smiles with smiles etc.

6

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VI. Shalom Safari Three: Turner Community Garden

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

Being outside, anticipating planting and growing a garden - (planting). What I consider the wonders of God. (a garden)

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 4

How were they, or how were they not met?

It was cold, but I was happy to be out and planting a garden. The possibilities of others enjoying and experiencing the bounty of God's love is priceless and creates Shalom

7

NOTE CHANGES IN QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Terrible 2 – Bad 3 – OK 4 – Good 5 – Great
 Using the scale below, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience

1. How would you rate the Turner Health Fair Safari? _____

Why? _____

I didn't make it to this one.

2. How would you rate the Turner Shopping Area Safari? 4

Why? This shopping area is where I shop
 a lot. Its familiar and like home. I was
 able to look at it differently that day.
 Smiling, helping people, families together
 set was outshining the bad clutter, bars on
 windows

3. How would you rate the Turner Community Garden Safari? 4

Why? being able to walk around a beautiful
 garden and imagining the plants growing
 and enjoying the renewing of life is
 a way of achieving Shalom

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Terrible 2 – Bad 3 – OK 4 – Good 5 – Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

4. How would you rate the overall project experience? _____

Why? _____

5. How would you rate the Playing 4 Change videos? _____

Why? _____

6. How would you rate the Annie Allen Shalom video? _____

Why? _____



4-4
5 122
23
20

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

7. How would you rate the project handouts and information? 4

Why? For me, having something in writing to see the bigger definition of Shalom leads to more understanding.

8. What worked? _____

9. What didn't work? _____

10. What needs to be changed or discarded? _____

11. What needs to be added? _____

12. Additional comments or suggestions _____

Shalom is a very misunderstood word. Its like trying to define love. We spent a lifetime trying to show love. And now I am trying to spread shalom along with love. It has to start in the heart. Sharing a smile and a kind word goes a long way. If all of us in the community would try it, it could spread world-wide. The peace I feel daily is truly a good thing.

VIII. Final Reflections

The stated purpose of this project was the development of a spiritual formation process which can be used to help First Baptist Church of Turner experience and express shalom in the Turner Community.

1. What now? Offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation. _____

Printed Name _____
Signature _____ Date _____

Experiencing and Expressing Shalom

Focus Group Questionnaire

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Drew University**

Steven R. Neal

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

II. Experiencing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom? 3
2. How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of experiencing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

When I was in Seminary (1959-1961) shalom was not a big topic. So I had a fairly shallow understanding.

Years in ministry, being in churches of 3 denominations has helped open my eyes and self to explore more deeply and from that I have a new sense of importance to what it would

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Years in ministry in 3 denominations - listening, reflecting on other's ideas and thoughts

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

III. Expressing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of expressing shalom? not as important to my daily
2. How has your understanding of expressing shalom changed? walk

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of expressing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

The project has opened my heart and soul to
the fact Christians need to be kinder, gentler,
more Christ like

It is hard to be a grouch and be a Christian.
Shalom provides a door to walk through, leaving
the old behind and receiving the new.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

As our walk progresses, the change comes (or not)
All expressions are (1) good (2) indifferent (3) bad
depending on our understanding (and implementation)
Some "get it" other don't - Shalom is our
EXPRESSION

4

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

IV. Shalom Safari One: Turner Health Fair

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

Not sure as the project was new to me
as far as (1) purpose (2) level of participation

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? MORE THAN MET

How were they, or how were they not met?

A lot of energy went into the project,
a lot of participation by community and
those providing the fair. A good
experience.

5

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

V. Shalom Safari Two: Turner Shopping Area

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

No preconceived ideas, but expected it to be similar to a shopping trip with my wife. However we moved around different shops and I began to watch other shoppers and what they were doing.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 4

How were they, or how were they not met?

Started watching store employees as well as people shopping. In particular interactions and attitudes.

Observed that many employees were ~~other~~ of other races & ethnic groups. Generally non-white employees were better at relating to shoppers/customers.

6

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VI. Shalom Safari Three: Turner Community Garden

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

no expectations when we began.
However could see several possibilities
of a place where people could come,
relax and talk with each other.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 3

How were they, or how were they not met?

not enough people from community
so most interaction was in the group.
would like to have seen ~~more~~ more
people there but weather not cooperative

7

NOTE CHANGES IN QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

Questionnaire scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
 Using the scale above, answer the questions below.

VII. Overall Project Experience

1. How would you rate the Turner Health Fair Safari? 4

Why? much activity - busy place
but well organized. Displays good,
people were excellent

2. How would you rate the Turner Shopping Area Safari? 4

Why? The mixture of races, business even
though weather not conducive - saw
a good mix of races shopping and
working

3. How would you rate the Turner Community Garden Safari? 3

Why? Again, weather not good not much
inter face with people involved.

8

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

4. How would you rate the overall project experience? 4

Why? A real look at various people -
different ethnic backgrounds all
getting along (for most part)

5. How would you rate the Playing 4 Change videos? 4

Why? A good look at various ways
of getting along

6. How would you rate the Annie Allen Shalom video? 4

Why? Again a great example of races -
cultures all in harmony with each
other.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
 Circle the words above, and write each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

7. How would you rate the project handouts and information? 4

Why? They worked to explain and
reinforce the project

8. What worked? pretty much everything

9. What didn't work? the community garden
experience

10. What needs to be changed or discarded? _____

nothing

11. What needs to be added? good variety of
situations - a little more fine-tuning
would help.

12. Additional comments or suggestions _____

NONE

FORGIVE THE WRITING - ARTHRITIS IN
HANDS.

VIII. Final Reflections

The stated purpose of this project was the development of a spiritual formation process which can be used to help First Baptist Church of Turner experience and express shalom in the Turner Community.

1. What now? Offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation. A little fine tuning - but ~~not~~ otherwise will
the theme of ~~ing~~ all helping and
getting along stands out

Printed Name Robert L Miller

Signature Robert L Miller

Date 5-12-2013

Experiencing and Expressing Shalom

Focus Group Questionnaire

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Drew University**

Steven R. Neal

1

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

I. Understanding Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of shalom? 3

2. How has your understanding of shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

For years I heard people say shalom means peace, but it always seemed as if God's meaning had a higher purpose to me. It had to do with people-to-people, how we treated one another, and a holy solemn quality. Over the time we have been on this shalom safari, I have begun to look at people and want to get along with people, often & better.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

I believe through prayer and my circumstances God has changed me.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

II. Experiencing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of experiencing shalom? 2
2. How has your understanding of experiencing shalom changed? 5

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of experiencing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

As I hurried through life experiences and relational experiences I realized I didn't look for the good or the make up of peace and shalom in them. I now look for ways to express care and understanding in situations and with people I barely noticed before.

What caused such change, or lack of change?

Learning and looking and thinking about shalom and what it embodies. Also a year of personal dependence and pain helped.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

III. Expressing Shalom

1. When this project began, how developed was your understanding of expressing shalom? 2
2. How has your understanding of expressing shalom changed? 4

Offer a brief reflection on your understanding of expressing shalom and how such understanding has changed, deepened, lessened, or stayed the same throughout this project.

I was unsure, and fearful at first to try this interaction with people. I didn't know what to expect, so I decided to think that people would respond positively, because I believed people would respond to a word or smile. I noticed people did so. I think my awareness and going out of the way to see and act has increased. It has also made me happier.
What caused such change, or lack of change?

One thing I did was pray about it - asking for help to view people differently and be more friendly. Look for shalom.

4

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

IV. Shalom Safari One: Turner Health Fair

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

Didn't know I'd think I'd ever been to a health fair.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 4

How were they, or how were they not met?

People were friendly, offered free things and information. It was well organized. We were able to make connections with people that we could work with cooperatively.

5

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Not at all 2 - Very little 3 - Somewhat 4 - Much 5 - Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

V. **Shalom Safari Two: Turner Shopping Area**

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

People to be accurate and bring their
everything.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 2.

How were they, or how were they not met?

They were not met. One worker smiled
and asked how we were. A customer
offered to open a door for one of our
group and let that person out. As well
he spoke to us pleasantly.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Not at all 2 – Very little 3 – Somewhat 4 – Much 5 – Very much
Using the scale above, answer each question below

VI. Shalom Safari Three: Turner Community Garden

1. Did you participate in this Shalom Safari? Yes No (circle one) If yes, answer the following questions:

What were your expectations?

we want to look around, find out what the community was doing and why. We were thinking we could team up with them in the garden. We hoped to find out what they needed and if they could help us. Our church is right there.

2. Using the scale above, were your expectations met? 5

How were they, or how were they not met?

They were met by very friendly and helpful people who work in the garden. We received information, encouragement and manpower to create some landscaping. That is very similar along the front near the street. (continuity) Also we learned the people who work on the garden are clearing and cleaning an area to walk on.

7

NOTE CHANGES IN QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Terrible 2 – Bad 3 – DK 4 – Good 5 – Great
 Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience

1. How would you rate the Turner Health Fair Safari? 4

Why? because the people had a cause, were interested in others.

2. How would you rate the Turner Shopping Area Safari? 4

Why? We were with an open, learning attitude and good attitudes were expressed by others

3. How would you rate the Turner Community Garden Safari? 5

Why? It's a lovely, lovely garden with caring, helpful people volunteering there. They also plan to share food grown there. Some of the gardeners advised and helped us build a cross and plant some flowers etc.

Questionnaire Scale: 1 – Terrible 2 – Bad 3 – OK 4 – Good 5 – Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

4. How would you rate the overall project experience? 4

Why? Different individuals coming together
and working together. We expanded
our world.

5. How would you rate the Playing 4 Change videos? 5

Why? People were making music
with love and laughter. They were
having fun together.

6. How would you rate the Annie Allen Shalom video? —

Why? _____

Questionnaire Scale: 1 - Terrible 2 - Bad 3 - OK 4 - Good 5 - Great
Using the scale above, answer each question below.

VII. Overall Project Experience Cont'd

7. How would you rate the project handouts and information? 4

Why? We had information, and
an idea of expectations

8. What worked? Being involved, Being
willing to try new and different.

9. What didn't work? Not looking for solutions
and not trying or expecting the
best.

10. What needs to be changed or discarded? Preconceived
notions, narrow views.
Perhaps being able to carve out more
time to implement ideas.

VIII. Final Reflections

The stated purpose of this project was the development of a spiritual formation process which can be used to help First Baptist Church of Turner experience and express shalom in the Turner Community.

1. What now? Offer suggestions as to how we take what we have experienced and offer it to the congregation. _____

Printed Name	<u>Laurel A Neal</u>
Signature	<u>Laurel A Neal</u>
Date	<u>5-10-12</u>

Reflections of our Shalom Safari - Saturday 5, 2013

Reflecting on the visit to the Turner Recreation Center for their annual health fair brings several thoughts to mind. Not having been to a previous health fair, or other event at that location made a general first good impression on me. Those involved appeared to be focused and sincere on helping and informing everyone (residents/neighbors, multi-cultural or others) who were interested in their specific table/booth. The workers showed a spirit of outward cooperation and harmony, at least for the period we were there. No one seemed "territorial," nor unwilling to "help" as needed. The blood drive especially, appeared to be successful (always needed), although I guess some of the health tests advertised were actually unavailable.

The organizing Turner Recreation Commission did a "well done" job; the area was inviting and welcoming, and those in charge appeared to know what they were doing. Some areas could have used more space, but they did a great job using what they had. I think I noticed only one no-show table, showing that most committed, followed through with that commitment to appear. No one acted as if they were in a rush to leave.

My view of "health" also includes spiritual, which would have included Turner churches. However the word, "holistic" in Turner may have in the past appeared negative. Then again could have been the issue of space. I wonder if it has ever been presented to the TRC.

In my opinion, another group I saw missing was the Neighborhood Watch Group from the Turner Rec. area (the one that meets at FBC; another connection to the church.) The neighborhood concerns can be a vital part of mental & social health. Even if someone did not live in the Turner Rec. area, groups are in nearly every neighborhood in Wy. County, but recently found out that many have not been exposed to the benefits.

I feel the health fair, on the whole, reflected a genuine caring and inviting place, which reminded me that this is the image our church should always be projecting both inside and outside.

Joyce Milton
Key Advisory Committee Member

Reflections of our Shalom Trip
Meeting - Jan. 27, 2013

Our field trip to the Shopping center on Sun., Jan. 27, was a bit of an eye-opener to me in the respect that I think my mind is often too busy to actually take the time to observe things around me. I'm fairly certain that I am not the only one that has felt that way. Saying that, makes me more aware that I should take the time to appreciate and recognize the Shalom in my own life.

The first awareness I had leaving the car was a general external view of the area: the bars and locks on some of the businesses. Then as we went from place to place, the protection and caution seemed to carry over to many areas: inside store product cabinets locked to prevent shoplifting, door-scanners & ceiling mirrors to name a few. It made me sad that we, have come to this in many areas. It made me think of it enough the next day to pray an extra prayer for those who have made this necessary and do not know God as I do. I suppose that Shalom was present to the extent of the organizing of the store owners for self-protection, and for safety of others.

As we went through most of the stores, I observed Shalom in different cultures and even in an suit-dressed Oriental father with six dressed little girls doing grocery shopping. They represented a wholeness, even in the absence of a mother (who could have been working.) They had obviously attended a worship service and were probably stopping by the store on the way home.

The stores, on the whole, seemed to have numerous items that people want, not necessarily need. Maybe this is an anti-shalom in our society, in general, since there are so many already struggling just to make ends meet. Many see and buy wants vs. needs. The pharmacy in CVS seemed to be a Shalom area in the respect that it was quiet, appeared to have health and healing products to suit almost everyone and the working pharmacist seemed to be professional and smiled as we walked by.

The food smells were pleasing and especially in the area where we had a meal. This, being a Mexican restaurant, represented Shalom in culture differences. Our group represented Shalom in the harmony of sharing a meal together, as did the meal, itself, in the fullness we all felt.

In general, I feel it was a positive experience for us as a group.

Joyce Miller
Lay Advisory Council

Reflection of Shalom Meeting
February 23, 2013

As we looked at Jeremiah 29: 1-7, reviewing all of the craftsmen and artisans who had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon, verse 5 told them what God said they could do to reach "Shalom" in their lives. His instructions clearly gave them a new way to begin again. The result of their obedience could be the 'asset-based community' described in 'Shalom.' This would have had to have been the concerned cooperative "togetherness" that is always needed to progress forward, especially since we can only imagine they would have nearly started from scratch to rebuild. The homes and gardens would be the obvious and necessary to continue living. The satisfaction would be the completion and maintenance.

As we gathered later with the three men from the community, thoughts of the correlation of a "rebuilding" come to mind. Although I do not think they are affiliated with our church directly, they are obviously concerned community volunteers that truly care enough to do more than just 'talk about it'. They seemed very organized for direct action (another Shalom quality). In effect, they are starting over again in their joint efforts to landscape the front of the church, but being sensitive enough to include church members and listen to ideas with sincerity. I see many "Shalom" qualities in their efforts for the church landscape program and feel this as a personal opportunity to help as well.

I feel it was a positive experience, and since they have the Turner Community Garden already established, with this kind of unselfish endeavor, who knows what could be next for the community.

Joyce Miller
Lay Advisory Council

January 12, 2012

Thoughts on the First Shalom Experiencing and Expression Trip

First, in reading the purpose of the project, I am immediately curious as to whether the perfect "Shalom" in this world can exist. I am more and more convinced the return of Jesus is closer than we might think or want to believe.

According to the definitions for Spiritual Formation and for Shalom seems to me to be the goal we are reaching for as Christians. Certainly I do not view it as "pie in the sky" or a "great idea, but hard to do". I am not sure in my own mind and heart how much of it we as Christians are capable of projecting, and how much the world around us even cares about it.

I believe the church of Jesus Christ has to take the first long step by actually becoming "again" the church of Jesus Christ. I look at the question of denominations, of theology, the human spirit which often wants less than more, and I am immediately "smacked in the face" by the enormity of Shalom which is a concept of complete renewal.

Shalom, as defined by Strong's Concordance, is a complete, whole person, who is healthy physically spiritually, is at peace, and all the other definitions. The world around us today, for the most part, is becoming everything Shalom is against. Certainly we have some bright spots in the work of Jesus Christ in *this world*, but the darkness continues to close in. How many of the attributes listed by Strong's Concordance are true today in our world?

Completeness,
Wholeness,
Health,
Peace,
Welfare (which I do not see as the welfare we have today)
Asset based on community, development
Love for God, self and neighbor
Organizing for direct action
Multicultural, multifath collaboration.

I see the church being attacked more frequently by government and by those who are against everything Jesus Christ stands for. I see the darkness of evil closing in on government, schools, business and the home.

I see the church giving in too much to the world in trying to be like the world so that the church can then heal it all.

At my age I can see the signs of God's Shalom starting already. But I also can see the darkness of the world holding us tightly and not wanting us to get away.

I do believe that if Shalom is to be with us, we need more of what we saw at the Turner community experience a few weeks ago. There was bustle, there was peace, there was frenzy, there was excitement, and a hope of community helping itself and those who are a part to have a better life, and from that to receive what God is offering to his children.

But I also realize that the Turner experience was a tiny toe print in a world that has gone insane in its sin.

Rev. Bob Miller
Lay Committee-Advisory Committee

1-12-13

In a windy Saturday we took a Shalom Safari to a familiar place. On this day we came to see, experience and think about a Health Fair in our 'own' Turner Rec Center.

When we entered the door we were greeted and encouraged to take advantage of the services provided. We entered for drawings and received the blood drive given ^{in honor of Jimmie Bentley} the ^{med} friends and made new ones. We were educated on some health facts and given written information on more. We learned more about the community. Garden plots to our church and could have gifts of seed packets.

Some of us had eye and hearing tests given by the Lions Club. Everywhere there was a happy spirit of helpfulness shared by those in our community.

Before we went to the health fair we had a breakfast of ^{snacks} things that were shared by our families.

S. Systemic and Sustainable Change

The Turner Recreational Center is a long established part of the community. This building has housed the school's administration the elementary school, and is now the local public library and the community center for the very young to the senior Elderberries. The operation is well organized with many activities. It is funded through the Turner school system 202 and dues and fees from the public. We are fortunate to have an active center with caring, efficient staff.

H Healing, health, harmony, and wholeness

Health and wellness are strong points of consideration. The day of visitation there was a health fair that included blood donation, blood pressure, sugar testing, other health services, community gardening and students from the KCK School of Nursing. Everyone was working together. You could see people working together - wanting to help. Smiles were everywhere. Of special interest was the socializing and words of cheer and comfort given to those donating blood. (visual and hearing).

A Asset based Community Development

The building is open daily with well qualified personnel. Many of the services are free. To walk around the gym 10 times you get a playing card to play poker on Wednesday. The more you walk - or use the treadmill- the more cards you can get to better your five hand cards. The center is open to suggestions to better the community development.

L Love of God, self and neighbors.

I didn't hear the gospel spoken, but I saw it everywhere in action. The caring, the smiles, the sense of security and the orderly conduct. The constant attempts to fill the physical, health, and cultural and educational needs of the community. It is a joy just to be around the staff.

O Organizing for direct action

The staff is well organized and operations run smooth. Safety of the child is the first thought. Everyone appears to know what to do in an emergency.

M Multicultural, multifaith collaboration

Turner is a multicultural area. It is represented by many different churches. The First Baptist Church of Turner is exceptionally active in the youth of the community -- those within and without the church building. It appears as though the multifaith live comfortable in the area without fear. I don't observe an open "push" of the multifaith. I have not visited a church of a different faith or culture. The school system has a challenge with the multiple languages and learning levels. Yet, Turner is meeting these challenges on a daily basis.

From this visit, I came away with good feelings. It is a community that cares about all of the people. It was a special health day. I could see love and care for those giving and for those receiving.

SHALOM

Mary Lou Robinson
Mary Lou Robinson

S. Systems and constraints change

Our officials meeting was held February 26, 2013 to finalize design for the ~~cross~~^{cross} and garden in the front of the church. The designers, gardeners, as well as the men and boys of the church on labor day, will provide a beautiful area for a part of 55th street.

II. Healing - Health - Harmony - Wholeness

Beauty helps to heal. Live plants will continue the harmonious scene for a few ~~years~~^{years} on 55th Street. The church will be a part of this continuous beauty, peaceful and inviting to not seen.

A. Asset-based community development.

The ~~Community~~^{Community} Garden was developed from an unused public area behind a medical clinic. There were many volunteers. We were planning and talented experienced workers. The beauty of the park has extended to the front of the clinic. The church will continue the same theme. This asset-based provides design, ideas and finances to the community. These talented and experienced people work hard with the community. The dream is to continue the ~~same~~ theme along 55th Street. The theme is simple, clean design and beautiful w/ just the right kind of ~~plants~~^{flowers} and instructions on up keep in provided.

1. Love for God, Self, Neighbor

God has given us the responsibility to care for the land. The area in front of the church will display a new wooden cross in the middle of a well design, peaceful garden. Two wooden benches will provide a place to sit and rest. The meadows will have the advantage of obtaining peace and beauty on a daily basis.

2. Organizing for David's Vision

The current smaller room is a safety problem. A man has volunteered to make a new room. The men and boys of the church will provide the labor. Funding will come from donations and budgeted funds. Work will follow the design proposed. Work will be coordinated with the experienced workers and designers of the Community Gardens.

3. Multicultural - Multi-faith Collaborations

I'm not sure how our church garden will affect cultural/faith ones in the future. In the discussion stage, the church wants to probe the possibility of a "peace pole" in the community garden. There are men in the church with corporate skills that may be able to create the pole.

Respectful
Mary A. Riboni
2/26/13

5

Systemic and Sustainable Change:

The area visited was 47th and Mission Road. The area has experienced change in the past few years. The "Bairy Green" is closed due to finance problems. The laundry mat building was absent of all machines. The grocery store has a different ownership. The variety of eating establishment continues to grow and add new business. I would predict a good economic growth.

H. Healing, Health, Harmony, and Wholeness.

There is ample parking for the area. People moved freely and appeared to know where they were going. The beauty shop had women waiting for services. The very small liquor store had a continuous flow of customers with a polite and friendly attitude. The grocery store had a fast check out with a flow of customers. The "Amigo" eating establishment had customers of all ages, sex, and ethnic group. The children were well behaved under parental guidance. The auto store speaks welcome words when we entered the door. Sales were very attentive to their customers with a smile and continued with eye contact. Some of the stores were closed on Sunday.

A. Asset-Based Community Development.

The area has many businesses to supply the need of the people. The developer appears to be aware of the needs and make changes and growth. With the coming of warmer weather maybe ice cream will again become available. The area and establishments are clean.

L. Love of God - self- and neighbor

When our eyes are focused, we see more. People outside the stores were sociable - held doors - and spoke more than "hello". This was a good experience I didn't expect. The liquor store clerk was friendly and informative. I observed no problems - which could be indicators of love. It was a Sunday afternoon. The CVS store had no clerk on the floor to assist a customer. I personally found this disturbing.

O. Organizing for Direct Action

The variety of business - the cleanliness of the building and grounds - plus the entrance with adequate parking would show a lot of direct action steps by the organizers. The business closed on Sunday had lots of bars over the windows & doors. This could indicate a potential crime problem. There was nothing visible to show a crime - but a strong deterrent was present.

M. Multicultural - Multifaceted Collaboration

Except the Mexican eating place "Arriaga" I did not observe multicultural. The food appeared different & appealing. The smells were wonderful everywhere. Because I could not understand the menu, I was not able to order "properly". Seeing the food made me want to taste it. The waitress said, "allow me to take the risk. I do not like to try new things. I see people not difference of race - culture, etc. Unless I am focusing on differences that would allow me to openly learn from each other freely."

Shalom

Mary Lou Robinson

visit January 27, 2013

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barbour, Rossine. *Doing Focus Groups*. Thousand Oak: Sage Publications, 2008.
- Calhoun, Adele A. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Christensen, Michael J. *A Call For Compassion: City Streets City People*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Cloud, Henry, and John Townsend. *Making Small Groups Works: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Foddy, William. *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and Practice in Social Research*. Cambridge: University Press, 1994.
- Foster, Richard, J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: Harper Collins, 1998.
- Gomik, Mark, R. *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Krueger, Richard. *Developing Questions for Focus Groups: Focus Group Kit*. Vol. 3, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004.
- Linthicum, Robert C. *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities*. Waynesboro: Authentic Media, 2006.
- Mata, Michael. "Theological Framework for Community Transformation (aka Shalom)." Presentation at Walk the Talk, Belfast, Northern Ireland, September, 12, 2006.
- Myers, William. *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program*. Chicago: Exploration Press, 2000.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M., Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca Laird. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.
- O'Neal, Sam. *Field Guide for Small Group Leaders*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Robson, Colin. *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Setting*. United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, 2011.
- Savage, Carl. "Learning From the Faith Story of the Community: The Role of Theological Reflection in DMIN Projects." In "The Value of Doctor of Ministry Education," edited by J. Kent Edwards. *Journal of Christian Ministry*, no. 1 (2009). Accessed May 10, 2010.

Savage, Carl and William Presnell. *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*. Louisville: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008.

Stokes, Allison. *Shalom, Salaam, Peace*. New York: United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, 2006.

Williams, Cecil, and Rebecca Laird. *No Hiding Place: Empowerment and Recovery For Our Troubled Communities*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992.