

ABSTRACT

The western mainline church has become a fragmented institution. This brokenness stems from the church's patriarchal system of functioning, defined by dominant subordinate classes based on gender. By claiming this system as God-ordained, church leaders and members resist for community. To challenge the system of patriarchy, RECONCILIATION THROUGH GROUP WORK WITH WOMEN emphasizes equality of all human beings as the only way to begin to address fragmentation in the church. This research establishes a vision of koinonia, reconciled community, the church by both addressing the harmful effects of by LISA R. WITHROW design by which the church can begin its journey to a reconciled community. The method involves practical work groups which adopt a feminist critique of church history, theology, liturgics, and psychology. Group members are challenged to develop their own systems of relating with other once they have become aware of the patriarchal stereotypes and roles with which they live on a daily basis. Group members work toward wholeness, and in turn reach. A thesis presented to the Faculty of Divinity, University of Glasgow, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This research involves a case study, including analysis of the impact on the church, to illustrate the alternative approach to relating in the church which leads to koinonia.

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ABSTRACT

The western mainline church has become a fragmented institution. This brokenness stems from the church's patriarchal system of functioning, defined by dominant and subordinate classes based on gender. By claiming this class system as God-ordained, church leaders and members reinforce a message of division which is contrary to Christ's vision for community. To challenge the system of patriarchy and propose an alternative way of relating which emphasises equality of all human beings is the only way to begin to address fragmentation in the church. This research establishes a vision of koinonia, reconciled community, for the church by both addressing the harmful effects of patriarchy on people within the church and by providing a design by which the church can begin its journey to such a reconciled community. The method involves practical work in groups which adopt a feminist critique of church history, theology, liturgics, and psychology. Group members also are challenged to develop their own systems of relating with each other once they have become aware of the patriarchal stereotypes and roles with which they live on a daily basis. Group members work toward wholeness, and in turn reach out to other groups and individuals searching for alternative ways of relating. Thus, the journey toward koinonia is born, and the church realises its original intent - sharing the good news of empowerment and freedom for all people in Christ. This research involves a case study, including analysis and impact on the church, to illustrate the alternative approach to relating in the church which leads to koinonia.

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CHAPTER 6: A CASE STUDY - GROUP WORK WITH WOMEN

CHAPTER 7: INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS OF THE WOMEN'S GROUP

CHAPTER 8: EARLY ISSUES FOR THE WOMEN'S GROUP

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not been previously presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Rev. David Hamilton.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to consider the hypothesis that the western church must find an alternative way of functioning in order to bring about reconciled, emancipated community within itself. I propose to address the problem of increasingly fragmented community within the western church by offering a paradigm which focuses on the needs of women and men directly, and initially separately, followed by a coming together with new understanding. At the same time, I wish to dispense with a patriarchal¹ and hierarchal approach to church life, which I claim divides the church in its very nature. The goal of this proposal, through a systematic approach, is to bring about healthy and reconciled community koinonia.²

I wish to argue that even a brief examination of contemporary norms in theology and psychology as applied to the western church will reveal that separation and fragmentation inevitably occur when a dominant/subordinate class system is promoted by those involved in church hierarchy. I must meet the objection that I too am proposing a time of separation for women and men within the paradigm outlined in subsequent chapters; however, this initial separation is part of a deliberate attempt to focus on male and female agendas specifically without giving rise to dominant/subordinate functioning within the process.

In order to examine the hypothesis, namely that the church needs an alternative way of functioning to bring about

reconciled community, I wish to make clear that I am concerned with presenting a summary only of the impact patriarchal thinking has had on human beings, especially women. The history and analysis has been fully dealt with in feminist literature in recent years.³ This summary is not the primary focus of the thesis, but serves to give a background survey to explain what I see as the major problem confronting the church presently. I also have space here only to lay out the paradigm for change and to examine in-depth one of its facets. Because I write from the female perspective, I will look at the women's issues most specifically within the paradigm.

Once the problem of fragmentation based on patriarchal thinking has been surveyed and a paradigm developed for an alternative way of functioning within the church, I will show how this scheme plays out in a specific case study based on a women's group which I have conducted over two years. Following the case study, I will discuss the relevant contributions and corrections that this kind of work can bring to the church in terms of a model for reconciliation.

This research paper focuses on three predominant elements of church life: its theology, its worship and its pastoral care. The paper proceeds to examine each element in summary form in three contexts. First, theology, worship and pastoral care based on traditional models are challenged as harmful to both men and women, but primarily women. Second, these elements are woven into a case study, where women meet to discuss issues that are based on tradition and how they

have found difficulty with this tradition. The women learn to develop their own models of relating theologically, liturgically, and pastorally. Finally, the contributions and challenges the women address in the case study are combined with recent feminist scholarship to develop an alternative paradigm for the church through koinonia. Once community is built in terms that are helpful to all members in different ways, the church becomes a strong foundation from which to reach out to people in the world searching for a haven and also for a proclamation of the Christian good news that no longer discriminates by gender, race, class and economic status.

Part One of this research will present the problem of fragmentation with which the church is confronted and the consequences of not dealing with the problem. This section discusses the underlying ecclesiastical history, theology and also secular psychology which the church has largely adopted as part of its pastoral care,⁴ as negative contemporary norms which are harming the church. Part Two develops a paradigm for healing, and illustrates the paradigm in a two-year case study. Part Three looks again at contemporary norms and suggests adjustments to traditional thinking in ecclesiastical terms. Finally, Part Four integrates the elements discussed in Parts One to Three and shows that the proposed paradigm is necessary for the church's health and growth, by its bringing about reconciliation and koinonia within the church.

ENDNOTES

1. The term "patriarchy" in this research is defined as the institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in church and society. For a fuller definition, see Appendix One.

2. Koinonia is the New Testament Greek word for "fellowship" or "communion." I use it in this research as a word describing Christian community in terms of companions sharing with each other and in Christ. (See Alan Richardson's A Dictionary of Christian Theology, SCM Press, Ltd., 1969. p. 187.; Alan Richardson's A Theological Word Book of the Bible, SCM Press, Ltd., 1957. p. 81. See also Acts 2. 41-42 and 1 Corinthians 12. 12-13 for a description of fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

3. Examples include: Rosemary Radford Ruether in Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology, SCM Press, Ltd., 1983, and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza in In Memory of Her, SCM Press, Ltd., 1983. Radford Ruether critiques patriarchal history and theology through a feminist understanding. Schussler Fiorenza challenges patriarchal biblical interpretation that has rendered women almost invisible.

4. See Appendix One for a working definition of "pastoral care."

PART I: The Problem of Patriarchy for the Church

CHAPTER ONE: PRESENTING THE PROBLEM AND THE CHALLENGE FOR THE WESTERN CHURCH

Introduction

The Western Church has encountered the problem of defining relationships since its origins almost two thousand years ago. Questions of how people relate to God and each other through language, worship and church structure were as relevant to the churches in the first century as they are today. Paul faced fragmentation and divided relationships in the church in Corinth circa 55 A.D.¹ Paul's answer to the conflict in that case was to turn to a liturgy that embodied healing and reconciliation, the eucharist.² He told the Corinthians to think in terms of unified diversity, where people had something unique to offer each other and God. At the same time, they were to come together to share in a liturgical act focused on building *Koinonia*, unified community.³ Paul was also telling the Galatian church that former hierarchical relationships based on race, sex and social status were no longer valid when people came together in the name of Christ.⁴ Paul called people to change radically their outlooks based on the commandment of unconditional love which Christ fulfilled during his life. The challenge and call are no less vital today, as we still experience separation, isolation and fragmentation in the church.

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The Problem

William Lazareth and Barbel von Wartenberg, leaders of the World Council of Churches' conference on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, believe that building reconciled community is the main task set out in the bible for all people.

The Old Testament declares that the first Adam (humankind) consists of male and female persons who are created equally in God's image for life in community. The New Testament proclaims that the church consists of male and female persons who are baptized equally into Jesus Christ . . . it is a basic affirmation of the entire bible that such community life in the Spirit of God is distinguished by peace and justice, freedom and fullness, joy and love, unity in diversity.⁵

Before the church can begin the journey toward its new vision of growth and reconciliation, it must look introspectively at the damage done to both women and men in its patriarchal perspective of history and theology. Reconciliation cannot occur without honest assessment of past and present patriarchal attitudes that render people invisible and indeed, harm marginalised groups.

Before we can describe and discuss the hope for a new community of women and men as new humanity in Christ (cf. Eph. 4.22ff.), we are confronted by the methodologies, histories, and interpretations of what it means to be human. The biblical picture of Gen. 2:7 portrays human beings as both flesh and spirit. The fall described later in Genesis reminds us that humanhood expressed in community is subject to sin which creates hindrances to the formation of the new community in Christ.⁶

These hindrances come in the forms of injustices which many

marginalised groups in the church experience. Religiocultural traditions may exploit a sex, race, or class leading to a dehumanised existence where people cannot take responsibility for their own lives. "A vision of new community includes a conscious overcoming of these injustices so that the gift of humanhood is returned to us in the mystery of reconciliation."⁷ The problem occurs when the church does not recognise that it has become fragmented and oppressive, especially in terms of women and men. Churches which do not give credence specifically to women's experience fail to understand the majority of their membership; they also fail to experience the leadership gifts and talents that many women could bring to the churches to build dynamic, relational community. To date, in fact, the whole mainline church has failed to address women's issues in any affirming, comprehensive way. The problem is complicated further when both historical church tradition and psychology acknowledge the importance of relationship, but deny that women's approach to relationship is valuable, and instead redefine it as either evil or immature. Just as Christian conventions adopted cultural conditions as far as women have been concerned, so has psychological theory been conditioned by social conventions which preceded and aided its development. "The results are disappointing: a church that fails to practise what it has announced, followed by a psychology that claimed women's moral inferiority."⁸ In response to the situation, some women have chosen to accept the church's stance on the subordinate status of

women. However, many women have declared that they do not find the patriarchal framework and bias of the church helpful to them, and many more women believe that they actually are harmed by the patriarchal outlook of church leaders and members.⁹ Women are affected emotionally, spiritually, and sometimes physically by the attitude of the church. Many women face church leaders who tell them that they cannot be ordained, they cannot call God "Mother," and they cannot use inclusive language, for these acts defy God-ordained tradition. Some respond to this inflexibility by rejecting the institution altogether. Others choose to remain within the traditional church while looking for ways to change it. Still others prefer not to challenge too much because they fear the consequences. According to psychologist Jean Baker Miller, women have learned quickly in the dominant-subordinate scheme of patriarchy that they have a "place" which is devalued, but crucial to maintaining the set-up. To challenge the order directly often leads to greater hardship for women, by social ostracism, psychological isolation, and sometimes diagnosis of personality disorder, as well as economic difficulty. Thus, women experience a dilemma and often police their own behaviour and find indirect ways of acting and reacting to life-situations. The consequences of revealing their subordination and oppression are often too high a price to pay.¹⁰

However, there are large groups of women who clearly indicate that the church itself needs conversion experience, so that the women's theological and hermeneutical lens¹¹ may

become a legitimate part of its make-up. Without this change, the church becomes increasingly irrelevant to these women and to a number of men who find church hierarchy and expectations unfulfilling, and sometimes damaging.

Men too are affected by patriarchy. They are encouraged to share only those talents which are given significance by the patriarchal system, such as domination of hierarchical structure, responsibility for all "important" decision-making and leadership. They are not encouraged to build close relationships with other men or women or to share power so that all people are empowered by working and taking responsibility together. If a man chooses to share his power with a woman or relinquishes it altogether, he often faces undermining comments implying that he is easily manipulated and "weak." In other words, the flexible and open team approach toward enabling community growth in the church is not a viable option for those men who subscribe to patriarchal models.

Both men and women suffer from a patriarchal ecclesiastical system. However, I would take the harmful effect of this system one step further, and claim that patriarchal church itself is radically dysfunctional, harming the very nature of the church itself. The church cannot form koinonia when it sets up the limiting conditions for women and men which keep them separated, based on value judgments developed for each sex. The church does not strive for unity through value judgments such as these, but reinforces fragmentation. This whole approach to ecclesia runs contrary to Paul's efforts to

develop koinonia in the first century.

It is easier for women to see their own oppression in a patriarchal system, because they are in a subordinate position within the hierarchy. Systems that involve domination and subordination harm both the dominant group and the subordinate, however.

. . . members of the dominant group are denied an essential part of life - the opportunity to acquire self-understanding through knowing their impact on others. They are thus deprived of 'consensual validation,' feedback, and a chance to correct their actions and expressions. Put simply, subordinates won't tell. For the same reason, the dominant group is deprived also of valid knowledge about the subordinates. (It is particularly ironic that the societal 'experts' in knowledge about subordinates are usually members of the dominant group).¹²

The Challenge

Those women and men who remain in the mainline western churches are the people who face the challenge of determining the future for the institution. There are those who wish the church to remain the same as it always has been during their own lifetimes. In contrast, there are those who are committed to finding a way of revitalising the church, with a vision for a reconciled community. It is argued in this thesis that the most significant task ahead is to bring about reconciliation between women and men in the church. Currently, male-female relationships are not based on the unconditional regard and love which is the call of Christ. The first step toward building koinonia is to confront what some regard as the "traditional" role and stereotypes of women in the church. This step is crucial for two reasons.

First, the female sex crosses all class and race boundaries and represents the largest population of oppressed people within the church. Opening discussion about women's situations can lead to addressing other subordinate groups' experiences in the church. Second, women no longer can be dismissed as a minority within the institution. Their numerical presence is an overwhelming majority in most congregations. It is not their numbers, but their voices and viewpoints which are still a minority. Third, women have played a specific role in male-led church and society in ways no other subordinate groups have done. They have been linked with the dominant group in intimate and intense relationships, especially through creating families, primary settings for socialisation. Thus, understanding women's situation is crucial for comprehending the theological, psychological and social order; women's presence crosses all aspects of the church's and society's life. They are part of the community, yet they are confined to restricted and restrictive roles which are defined by men in power.

To open to the whole community women's perspectives, experiences and talents brings forth a new, creative and inclusive vision of the church. Indeed, including women's sitz im leben (setting in life), emancipates the church from its exclusively male vision called "patriarchy"¹³ and frees it to move toward unity. Further, to affirm women as they are moves the church closer to reconciliation of division by sex. Indeed, to create a community of affirmation and equality in terms of worth is to create space for the work of

God. . . , because they are captives of it. Functioning within . . .

I would suggest two reasons why women are currently the people most well-equipped to replace the dominant/subordinate or patriarchal models of thinking with a relational scheme for koinonia in the church. First, women are subordinate in a system of patriarchy, and therefore are better able to describe the negative aspects of such a system.¹⁴ They function within patriarchy but do not define how it operates. Therefore, once they gain an understanding of such a system, they begin to see how it keeps them in secondary support roles and renders them invisible in the leadership of church and society. An awareness of the negative effects of patriarchy leads many women to look for alternative ways of functioning, which are more helpful and possibly more natural to them. . . . When asked to describe themselves, they also will

On the other hand, many men who, in their own eyes, most often benefit from the present social and ecclesial system of patriarchy, do not necessarily have a desire to change the system. These men control how the system functions. In fact, patriarchy perpetuates itself through the dominant male group in cyclical fashion; to be dominant is the goal. The system already claims that men are "naturally" dominant over women. Thus, men have reached the goal simply by ascribing to the system. Then the church adds its blessing to the patriarchal system by ordaining it as God's natural order of creation, and men and women see few alternatives to the dominant/subordinate functioning. Many men and women are not completely aware of the injustices found in the patriarchal

system, because they are captives of it. Functioning within patriarchy can blind people to the negative effects on human beings. However, the people playing subordinate roles are the most likely to see first the impact of such a system. Those women who are aware of patriarchy as a system and realise that they do not necessarily benefit from it in a healthy manner, are the most likely people to press for change. They recognise different verbal and non-verbal

The second observation shows that women have the potential to promote a more relational system in the church because they have been socialised to be relational since birth. Indeed, women currently are defined by their relationships. Most descriptions of women by men primarily include words such as "daughter," "wife," "mother," "girlfriend," etc. When women are asked to describe themselves, they also will use a significant number of words that signify their essence in terms of their relationships instead of by personal characteristics or any occupation outside the home.¹⁵ Men, unlike women, describe themselves in terms of working occupation or status, and rarely in terms of "son," "husband," "father," or "boyfriend." Their self-description is less relationship-oriented and more individualistic than women's.

Likewise, marital status is very significant for descriptions of women. Titles such as "Miss," or "Mrs." tell the world that a woman is either single or married. The corresponding title "Mr.," for men does not reveal marital status and remains the same whether men are married or

single. Again, unlike men, women are labelled publicly by their single or married status.

Because women are conditioned to be relational,¹⁶ they understand the dynamics of relationship-building well. Frequently, women who take on significant responsibility for younger children, either through mothering or child-minding, become the primary communicators with most members of the family. They recognise different verbal and non-verbal signals within the family context. Women who work in office settings learn different dynamics, yet still focus on their communication signals because often their jobs depend on their "reading" situations clearly. Women learn to think in terms of relational systems instead of individualistic functioning.

The consequences of women approaching life in a primarily relational way, are that they already are aware of the need for good relationships to enhance life and give them and others support. They understand that each relationship within a community affects the whole.

Women have a greater recognition of the essential cooperative nature of the human existence. Despite the competitive aspects of society, there must be a bedrock modicum of cooperativeness for society to exist at all.¹⁷

Add creativity to co-operativeness as an overall proposition for building koinonia and human beings will find that everyone has to break through to a new vision repeatedly if she or he is to live holistically. This very personal kind of creativity and making of new visions is a continuing

struggle. It does not usually occur in open and well-articulated ways. However, it happens, and recently it can be seen most clearly in women.¹⁸

Christian community needs to affirm quality of relationship as well as the talents each person has to fulfil Christ's call to be inclusive and reconciled. However, within a reconciled and inclusive community, the understanding of relationships must be emancipated from dominant/subordinate models.

While women's and men's groups learn to care for their members and name their needs and experiences, they develop the basis for a new dialogue in the church. The ecumenical study programme "The Community of Women and Men in the Church" conducted by the World Council of Churches (1978-1982) for church representatives on a worldwide basis, is one such dialogue. Study and reflection for the four years focused on three aspects of church life:

1. Theology. 'A thorough examination needs to be made of the biblical and theological assumptions concerning the community of women and men in church and society.' 2. Participation. 'In order to be truly free, all people must participate in working toward their own liberation. This can be seen in all struggles for human rights and to overcome oppression.' 3. Relationship. 'A third area of urgent concern is the interrelationship of women and men who frequently exploit one another. This exploitation often takes the form of misuse of power over each other which is linked with the lack of understanding of mutual identity.'¹⁹

Examining theology, encouraging participation and building relationship are three important aspects of people working together for relationships of wholeness and health. With

this kind of foundation, individuals and groups learn to communicate in alternative ways and can establish a forum for dialogue. Then women and men begin to build the community, koinonia. The church becomes a place where a system of mutuality and co-operation replaces the patriarchal model of domination and subordination. By its wholeness, the church then is able to become a call to the world for the reconciliation, for it has itself shown that understanding and unity encompassing diversity is possible. The cost that the church may pay is that it may need to endure long-term conflict as it is challenged to change for the sake of its future.

The Consequences of Ignoring the Challenge in most churches, Without reconciliation and dedication to building koinonia that is emancipatory for both women and men, the church will not experience fulfilment of the commandment to love as Christ set out. Indeed, those who do not experience the feeling of Christian love and respect within the church because it uses exclusive liturgies and ignores women's concerns and needs, may not be able to see the presence of Christ for them in the church at all. Howard Clinebell, a pastoral counsellor, believes that for many church attenders, relationship with God in community is "dead." The word "God" itself is an empty symbol; God has become a being with whom there is little or no communication or understanding. Clinebell claims that empowering people to establish open relationships with each other is one way of bringing the love Christ talks

about alive in the church. He believes that people are "crippled" because of their inability to establish needs-satisfying relationships, and therefore cannot contribute toward establishing koinonia.²⁰

Many women and men are in a position of not experiencing the respect and love the church claims to give because they do not experience the blessing of the church or the affirmation that healthy relationship brings within the context of the Christian faith. Some of this emptiness may be reflected in falling membership as the church fails to address people's needs and concerns. Women especially encounter the church's antagonism through its rendering women's worth and experience in relationship invisible. Despite higher attendance of women than men in most churches, there still exists a sense that women cannot provide leadership in a powerful manner such as men - hence, the issue of ordination for women in many churches, or the repeatedly low percentage of women involved directly in governing bodies throughout the church. Because of this comment on women's acceptable place being in the pew, the church is in danger of sacrificing its potential for dynamic and creative community and shared leadership. To do that is to lose the context for practising the Christian faith.

Conclusion

To bring about reconciliation, wholeness, vitality and ultimately the fulfilled koinonia of the church, I develop in this thesis a vision for the future that involves journeying

through several stages of change. The next three chapters outline the problem that the church is encountering more specifically in terms of church history, worship practice and psychology combined with pastoral care. From there, I establish an alternative paradigm which addresses the problem of fragmentation and suggests a different path to reconciled community than the church is currently taking.

1. See Galatians 3: 28-29. For interpretation, see also William Baird, "Galatians," *Worship Bible Commentary*, The Society of Biblical Literature, 1988. p. 138.

2. Lazarath, William H. and Rachel von Wartenberg, *The Ministry of Women and Men in the Church*. Constance F. Barry, ed. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982. p. 144.

3. Ibid., p. 144.

4. Ibid., p. 144.

5. Katz, Maxine and Jeanne Stevenson Maessner, *Women in Theology and Transition: A New Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991. p. 7.

6. Kuehner, Rosemary Redford, *Women Church: Theology and Challenge*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975. pp. 4-5.

7. Miller, Jean Baker (1986) *A New Psychology of Women*. Second Edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986. pp. 1-2.

8. "Hermeneutics" is another word for a methodological study of biblical texts in terms of religious interpretation.

9. Miller, p. 10.

10. See introduction and Appendix A for discussion of the definition of "patriarchy."

11. See Chapter Four for an analysis of women's perspective of men when both are functioning within the patriarchal system.

12. See Chapter Seven for examples in group work study.

13. Chodorow Nancy, *The Reproduction of Motherhood: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. p. 150.

17. Miller, p. 41.
18. Ibid., p. 44.
ENDNOTES

1. See 1 Corinthians 1. 1-12, and 1 Corinthians 12 for reference Paul's encounter with division in the Corinthian church.
2. See Wrightman, Paul. Paul's Early Letters: From Hope Through Faith to Love. Society of Saint Paul, 1983.
3. See Introduction for a definition of koinonia. See also 1 Corinthians 12. 4-31 for a description of koinonia.
4. See Galatians 3. 28-29. For interpretation, see also William Baird, "Galatians." Harper's Bible Commentary. The Society of Biblical Literature, 1988. p. 1208.
5. Lazareth, William H. and Barbel von Wartenberg. The Community of Women and Men in the Church. Constance F. Parvey, ed. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983. p. 144.
6. Ibid., p. 144.
7. Ibid., p. 144.
8. Glaz, Maxine and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner. Women in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991. p. 8.
9. Ruether, Rosemary Radford. Women-Church: Theology and Practice. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985. pp. 4-5.
10. Miller, Jean Baker. Toward a New Psychology of Women. Second Edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986. pp. 9-10.
11. "Hermeneutics" is defined here as a methodological study of biblical texts in terms of feminist interpretation.
12. Miller, p. 10.
13. See Introduction and Appendix One for discussion of the definition of "patriarchy."
14. See Chapter Four for an analysis of women's perspective of men when both are functioning within the patriarchal system.
15. See Chapter Seven for examples in group work study.
16. Chodorow Nancy, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. p. 150.

17. Miller, p. 41.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PROBLEM OF PATRIARCHAL CHURCH HISTORY

18. Ibid., p. 44.

19. Lazareth and von Wartenberg, p. ix.

20. Clinebell, Howard. Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966. pp. 46-47.

One of the most significant difficulties with the historical Christian tradition as it informs today's church is the negative impact it has on women. Because church history is recorded by those who think in patriarchal terms, it has diminished women's worth as human beings and done damage to women's lives in terms of their creativity, potential, self-esteem, mental and physical health. This chapter surveys the issues found in the historical journey through Christianity which have reinforced the subordination of women. But this subordination was justified by male theologians analytically arguing for the dominant and superior position of men. They developed a theology of domination and subordination, and for centuries both men and women have been living with this patriarchal system.

Understanding Woman's Role in Church History

How did this "patriarchal thinking" develop? It is the result of dominant and subordinate peoples who have lived in a patriarchal system. Schussler Fiorenza makes a useful distinction between patriarchy in terms of male supremacy and patriarchy in terms of misogynist sexism, and patriarchy in terms of Aristotelian philosophy is concerned with the relationships between the ruler and the ruled. The patriarchal system developed a well-defined system of male supremacy.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PROBLEM OF PATRIARCHAL CHURCH HISTORY

Introduction

One of the most significant difficulties with the historical Christian tradition as it informs today's church is the negative impact it has on women. Because church history is recorded by those who think in patriarchal terms, it has diminished women's worth as human beings and done damage to women's lives in terms of their creativity, potential, self-esteem, mental and physical health. This chapter surveys the issues found in the historical journey through Christianity which have reinforced the subordination of women. Much of this subordination was justified by male theologians analytically arguing for the dominant and superior nature of men. They developed a theology of domination and subordination, and for centuries, both women and men have been living with this patriarchal understanding.

Understanding Women's Roles in Christian Tradition

How did this "patriarchal thinking" based on classification of dominant and subordinate people come about? Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza makes a useful distinction between patriarchy in terms of male supremacy combined with misogynist sexism, and patriarchy in the classic sense, where Aristotelian philosophy is concerned with designating relationships between the rulers and the ruled. Aristotle developed a well-defined system of graded status based on the

dualisms of dominant-subordinate, authority-obedience, ruler-subject, within the State and within the household.

Wives, children, slaves and property were owned and at the disposal of the freeborn Greek male head of the household. He was the full citizen and determined public life. The patriarchal relationships in household and State according to Aristotle are based not on social convention, but on 'nature'. . . Slaves and freeborn women, Aristotle argued, are not 'fit to rule' because of their 'natures' which he in turn had defined according to their socioeconomic functions.¹

The polarity between the sexes became most explicitly defined with the introduction of the Athenian democracy, where "dignity and freedom for all people" was the ideal, but where sociopolitical roles based on human "natures" were strictly delineated.²

This tautological thinking was elaborated upon by the theologians Augustine and Aquinas, two Church Fathers who wrote extensively about women's role and place, without addressing women's perspectives. They incorporated the Aristotelian understanding of the inferior natures of women and slaves into the context of Christianity.³ For example, Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian definition of women as misbegotten men. Normatively, every male insemination supposedly produced another male in the image of his father, unless, by some accident, the female matter subverts the male and a defective human being is produced. He also speculated whether women's existence would have been necessary in creation before the Fall; women's only function was to reproduce, which was unnecessary in the original creation, where life never ended.⁴ Aquinas goes on to claim that woman

is inferior in body, mind and spirit. This inferiority is deepened by sin; woman's defective nature meant that she was created to be servile and subordinate.⁵ Indeed, the Greek fathers, following Philo, suggest that gender division and the existence of woman are a kind of divine afterthought, created with a view to the Fall and not a part of the original perfection of the spiritual nature.⁶

Schussler Fiorenza adds that the patriarchal ethos and structure within the church's thinking became completely entrenched in the Roman Empire, where two distinct hierarchical sub-systems, one for men and one for women, became the norm.⁷ She claims that the system of thinking that created superior and inferior classification led to the legitimisation of racism, colonialism, classism and sexism in both church and society.

Theories that locate all problems within an individual's personal nature tend to end up blaming the victim for her or his own subordinate status in an oppressive system. However, the real roots of women's issues include AND go beyond individual histories to the history of Christian women in society. Karen Armstrong, in The Gospel According to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West, claims that Christianity created and formed the Western world as we now know it, and continues to influence society even if some would describe human beings as living in a post-Christian age.⁸ Armstrong develops her theme by claiming that the fundamental problem that has led women to be in a subordinate and submissive position in the West is a so-called fear of

sexuality and a hatred of women by both men and also women themselves:

In all cultures, women have been seen as inferior beings: they are men's chattels and have no independent rights; they are considered spiritually and intellectually weaker than men; their whole duty in life is to pander to male comfort. To be a wife and mother is a woman's whole fulfillment and she must not ask for anything more. Her place is in the home. Women have shared this burden of inferiority in all cultures. However, in the West, women have had an especially difficult problem that has made the usual oppression especially onerous. It is a problem that Jewish and Islamic women, for example, do not share. The Christian world of Europe and America has been permeated by a hatred and fear of sex. Because men have been taught to think of sex as something evil, they have feared and hated women who have tempted them into this dangerous sexuality. Christianity has formed Western Society and Christianity has been the only major religion to hate and fear sex. Consequently, it is in the West alone that women have been hated because they are sexual beings instead of merely being dominated because they are inferior chattels.⁹

Peggy Reeves Sanday agrees with Karen Armstrong about male fears over the female body. No one knows why sexuality became the focus of such hate and fear, though Sanday postulates that overpopulation problems often lead to negative attitudes toward reproduction and a feeling of wariness and sometimes even disgust toward sexual intercourse.¹⁰

Whatever the reason behind the Church Fathers' negative attitudes toward the female personality combined with the female body, it is clear that the female became the object of lengthy theological discussion over time. Indeed, this discussion became the main focus for much of the dialogue in church history. In fact, a major and very grave issue evolved as men found it problematic that Jesus was born from

the body of a woman. In numerous sermons and in treatise after treatise, Mary was said to have remained a virgin not only before the birth of Christ, but afterwards as well.

Even today, the Pope repeatedly stresses that Mary remained 'inviolable'--a celibatarian euphemism meaning that her hymen was not ruptured during childbirth. If this had occurred, she would have been physically impaired just as any other mother is physically impaired by the birth of a child and 'ceases to be as good as new.' If she was to remain 'inviolable' however, she could not give birth in the normal way.¹¹

The history of Christianity is also the history of women's progressive silencing and incapacitation.¹² Through the ages, sexuality became a principal concern of the church, and women became the downfall of 'man,' as Tertullian, Augustine and Jerome (to name a few of the Church Fathers), were quick to point out in the Creation story. Augustine himself saw his own conversion in terms of a sexual struggle. As far as he was concerned, a conversion to Christianity meant a conversion to celibacy, and an erasure of all desire for sex. It follows, for Augustine, that every child born into the world has sin passed on to it by its parents and is thus condemned to eternal damnation. Sex is the means whereby Original Sin is transmitted.¹³

Thus, according to the Church Fathers, every feeling of desire is an experience of sin, and a reminder that human beings are "naturally" sinful at heart. Repeatedly found at the heart of this doctrine of sin is Eve, the cause of the fall, and subsequent guilt and evil. Sin, sex and women are bound together inseparably, and have been so for thousands of

years. Tertullian states it plainly in his treatise On Female Dress, from the third century:

And do you now know that you're each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree: You are the first deserter of the divine law: You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of Your desert - that is death - even the Son of God had to die. And do you think about adorning yourself over and above your tunics of skins [author's emphasis].¹⁴

One response that the Church invented to deal with the problem of women and sexuality was to encourage virginity. A sexless woman did not entice men, and even could give them inspiration, like the Virgin Mary. Yet, no woman could imitate Mary.

Mary . . . desexualized and humble, the feminine ideal, a symbol created to teach self-oppression to the oppressed, self-censure to the self-critical, self-exploitation to the doubly exploited. This ploy works best if the idol appears to be elevated, raised up on a pedestal and glorified. . . so the image of a sublime and elevated Mary was integral to the oppression of women. She is enthroned above us. She is pure; we are filthy. She is desexualized; we have sexual needs and problems. We can never measure up to her and should therefore feel guilty and ashamed. And that, in turn, makes us feel more humble.¹⁵

Woman could not be Mary; she had to make the choice-- virginity or motherhood. Either choice meant failure. Yet, virginity was valued as the next highest ideal set forth by the Church, so many women remained virgins (sometimes known as "honorary men"), or chose celibacy and lived in convents. A decision to live in a community of women was also a way for

women to avoid the world of marriage, and to gain some semblance of a career, though to be admitted to a convent meant that a woman already had to have a substantial dowry.

Virginity became the way of true spirituality. Women who took on the celibate life instead of marriage, as the means of salvation were thought of as transmuted males. Those who aspired to the holy life had to strip themselves of any hint of their femaleness. Thus were begun the nun's habit and the suppression of sexuality and sexual enjoyment in females which have lasted to today.¹⁶

However, this type of repression was not effective in all cases. Women who found that they did not need the presence of men around them to have a fulfilled life became threatening to men and some married women, and were labelled "independent" and "rebellious." The Church was gradually losing control over the movements of women, who even were beginning to form secret secular societies amongst themselves. The societies were often broken up by the Church on the pretext of sin; pride and autonomy occurred when women asserted that a person practiced virtue to a heroic degree if lived together.

Most women who chose the celibate life, however, remained locked away in convents--very few ventured forth into the world. Those who did often took on the role of martyrdom and died a violent death, actively pursuing and achieving self-sacrifice for Christ.

The Church has always maintained that martyrdom is the most privileged of the Christian vocations and the image of Christ offering himself on the Cross as a martyr of sacrificial love dominates the whole Christian ethos. However, the erotic element of martyrdom is really confined to women. Martyrs

Catherine of Siena all left their solitary lives to take an active part in the political worlds of their times. They often wore men's clothing when they were in public. By Victorian times, the idealized saint and sexless ("virgin") woman became the keeper of the house. Women martyrs who become in Christian legend passive victims whose sufferings are somehow unpleasantly sexual. It is the female saints who combine this self-destruction with eroticism, showing how the idea of suffering and women's sexuality had become deeply linked in the Christian subconscious.

We have seen already that contemplative nuns were encouraged to fantasise erotically about Jesus. When these fantasies of "love" were linked with penance the notion of the Christian woman as a victim, suffering physical pain for the love of Jesus becomes an important part of the ideal of female holiness.¹⁷

Another role for women began to evolve alongside martyrdom: sainthood. When the Church canonised individuals, it asserted that a person practised virtue to a heroic degree on earth, thereby guaranteeing a place for her or himself in heaven. The aim was to put these people in front of "common folk" to show an exemplary life and to encourage them to follow closely in the saintly footsteps. The female saints, however, were all virgins, or had repented into a life of celibacy. The message was clear. Sex and marriage did not exist as saintly attributes; they were for the second-class women of the Church. Yet, if one were able to achieve saintly virginity, one again would be promoted to honorary manhood. Joan of Arc, St. Colette of Corbie and St.

Catherine of Siena all left their solitary lives to take an active part in the political worlds of their times; they often wore men's clothing when they were in public.

By Victorian times, the idealised saint and sexless ("virgin") woman became the keeper of the house.

The Victorian ideal woman exacts male respect not by her confidence or by her self-assertiveness but by her submission. The potential for defiance that the myth once had has now gone. The Victorians revived only the myth of the idealised Virgin Mother and said that the only good woman was a sexless one. The woman remains a virgin, no matter how many children she has, because she remains impenetrable by foul male lust. It was only wicked and lascivious women who felt sexual pleasure.¹⁸

Meanwhile, more and more, women and children were shut away in the shrine of the home, removed from the male world of decision-making, ideas and action. Women were the guardian spirits of the home, yet they were also prisoners; men were often known to escape this sacred shrine to find some earthly reality in pubs, brothels, or by travelling. The dualistic thinking that promoted male as holy and female as earthy, male as dominant and female as subordinate had become cemented in both church and society by the end of the Victorian era.

Another approach that the Church took as it buried the sexual fear that was building in the Christian West was to initiate the Witch Hunts in the 15th century. The conceptualisation of the nature of Woman and that of the Devil finally merged at this time, and the Witch Craze exploded. The torture and killing were documented to be the worst in Scotland, France, the German States, and

Switzerland. The emotions and imaginations of Christians took hold of this belief in witches so powerfully that they began to believe dreams that had them copulating with the Devil. Other people believed so strongly in the witch that they made it their duty to kill thousands of women.

Jacob Sprenger, in the Malleus Maleficarum, a handbook used for persecution of witches, thanks God devoutly that men are free of this cursed sexuality and therefore free of witchcraft.

? it As for the first question, why a greater number of witches is found in the fragile feminine sex than among men, is indeed a fact that it were idle to contradict . . . Since women are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come under the spell of witchcraft. For as regards intellect, or the understandings of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature from men . . . But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to man.¹⁹

The implication of this statement is that God did NOT save women or die for women, and therefore He has abandoned them to sex and thus to the Devil. There had always been a tendency to push women outside God's plan for the world; now they have been not only excluded but made to assume the position of an enemy, alongside the Devil.

The antisex propaganda that the Church had been putting out for centuries was taking its toll. The fault was woman's of course. Just as she had been responsible for luring men to sin by her sexual power, now she was maiming men sexually by diabolic magic . . . It is she who forces him, however reluctant he might be, to copulate with her night after night, it is she who makes him impotent with other

women. Women have always been sexual temptresses but now their powers have increased.

A man's sexuality is projected on to the evil powers of a woman which have now grown to such proportions that a Papal campaign has been launched in Europe to combat it.²⁰

These are four faces of the Christian woman as displayed in Christian history: virgin, martyr, saint, and seductress (witch). Meanwhile, the Protestant Reformation brought about an alternative to these "roles" by exalting marriage (so that natural passions could be assuaged in an orderly manner). The Protestant teaching that was most influential was that human nature was essentially sinful and that permanent state of guilt was a proper mode of relating to the authority of God. This guilt was to be the foundation for the Protestant ethic. Redemption for sin, ~~could~~ could be found through obedience to God as defined by the church.

In times of change, those claiming authority have to show their power of social control and this is most commonly linked to suppression of all forms of spontaneous or libidinal behaviour. Sexuality is an obvious target: it embodies the most powerful of human drives, it transforms people and forms bonds between them capable of resisting external authority of every kind, it seeks privacy and freedom of expression, it is highly individualistic, it is difficult to control. Protestantism set about laying the foundation for its prurient reputation for sexual policing of the population.²¹

Thus, the most powerful controls and sanctions were set against fornication, and inevitably, the women were to be the objects of control, because they were the objects of desire. Consequently, marriage became the institution whereby control over sexual behaviour could be maintained.

The new ideal woman was a wife; she was to be dependent on

her husband emotionally in addition to financially. In the past, the woman sacrificed her life to God and the Church and had a priest as her confessor. The Reformation substituted the husband as the person to whom the woman must sacrifice her life. The woman began to be told that her life's purpose was to find a man and have children--this was her transfiguring religious experience; she was incomplete if not involved in Holy Matrimony. It evolved too that she was beginning to marry for "love" instead of financial and other practical reasons; sacrifice for love was the most noble of causes and the ultimate martyrdom.

It was not until the 19th century that the ideal of marrying for love took real root in the popular mind in practice as well as in literature. This does not mean that people were mercenary or soulless. Life was hard and serious for the poor and love was a luxury that they could not afford. Similarly the mortality rate made such a notion as "till death us do part" have a very different ring. Even in the 16th century, the average life expectancy was not much greater than it had been in the paleolithic era. The average age at death was between 25 and 30. Thus marriage could not be seen in such "world-without-end" terms as it has been since. . . Marriages never lasted as long as they did in the late 19th and early 20th century, until divorce became common. The divorce rate could be said simply to have replaced the death rate of previous centuries.²²

That is not to say married couples never loved each other. The ideal was that love would grow within the marriage, given

time. But even then this is a love of companionship and esteem. twelve children."²⁵ The husband was the one who

A woman in 16th century England and before was usually a companion and partner to her husband, helping to manage his estates, his business or working alongside him in the fields. By the Victorian period, it became fashionable to prove that you were wealthy enough to manage without a working wife, and women became delicate, decorative, and married because of "love" rather than utility, a debilitating and weakening state of affairs for a woman because it deprived her of an equality that she had gained as a practical partner to her husband.²³

Further, her function developed into becoming a nurse-wife to meet her husband's needs.

. . .the husband (with whom theologians were very largely occupied) was a mortally sick patient doomed to eternal damnation unless his nurse-wife sacrificed herself, or even put her life at risk, in order to fulfil her conjugal obligations by dosing him against incontinence ad libitum. In practical terms, this signified her sexual enslavement.²⁴

If she did not comply, she often received a beating.

Protestant Reformers may have been anxious to influence the family life; that was the place to start to separate people from their Catholic loyalties. Puritan Protestantism made religion a private, internal affair of the heart. Women no longer had religious involvement in the community and Church, but became deeply dependent on their husbands for instruction and prayers. The husband became the priest of his home, and the confessor for wife and children. Women lived for their husbands in the name of Christ. They still do. Sheila Collins quotes an elderly man in New York City whom she heard recently making the same kind of claim on his wife: "You

Nature, I say, doth paynt thee forther to be wife,
know how much my wife loved God? She loved him so much, she
bore me twelve children."²⁵ The husband was the one who
spoke for God, defined God's laws, and interpreted God's
judgment. The status of women declined even further as they
became more dependent and more tied to the home. The
emphasis on women's evil natures also declined--they became
weak and inferior. Instead of powerfully leading men to
their doom, they were so weak that they didn't have any means
of salvation unless granted spiritual guidance and
instruction by their husbands. Moreover, the size of the
family diminished and became "nuclear," so that the large
families of centuries before were no longer available where
women could support each other. Marriage was as an
institution transformed into the "earthly paradise" for
women, and was supposed to be the goal of their lives. It
also meant isolation and dependence, often leading to a loss
of self-confidence and self-esteem.

John Knox himself, in 1557, wrote a treatise which clearly
was meant to keep women "in their place." In The First Blast
Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women, he was protesting
against the rule of Mary, Queen of Scots. However, in his
protest, he outlined what he saw as the proper place for
women, based on their natures:

For who can denie but it is repugneth to nature, that the
blind shall be appointed to leade and conduct such as do
see? That the weke, the sicke, and impotent persons shall
norishe and kepe the hole and strong? And finallie, that
the foolishe, madde, and phrenetike shall governe the
discrete, and give counsel to such as be sober of mind?
And such be al women, compared unto man in bearing of
authoritie.

and Nature, I say, doth paynt them further to be weke, fraile, inpacient, feble, and foolishe; and experience hath declared them to be unconstant, variable, cruell, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment. As in jurisdiction (saith the lawe), in receiving of cure and tuition, in adoption, in publik accusation, in delation, in all popular action, and in motherlie power, which she hath not upon her owne sonnes. The law futhere will not permite that the woman geve any thing to her husband, because it is against the nature of her kinde, being the inferiour membre, to presume to geve any thing to her head.²⁶

The conflict through the ages between experience and authority was, and is a crucial issue for women.

Often, throughout history, they have denied their own experience and yielded to "authority:" God, scripture, tradition of the church, or theology, all interpreted and moulded by men.²⁷

Women have adopted, through history, the roles which have been assigned to them, and subsequently, the neurosis that often accompanies these roles. They begin to turn servanthood into a slave mentality, which develops into an identity crisis for women. Accompanying this mentality are all the feelings of guilt and resentment that develop when women are discontented, but are possibly afraid of

identifying and questioning the source of unhappiness: patriarchy.

The Impact of Patriarchal Church History on Women

Women have a long history of being called "guilty." They were guilty of the Original Sin, guilty for continuing to lure men into sin through sex, and guilty for not being perfect at the roles assigned to them by patriarchal church

and society. They have taken on this guilt, and may often wallow in it, sometimes manufacturing causes over which to feel guilty if one doesn't immediately present itself. "Show me a woman who doesn't feel guilt, and I'll show you a man," says Harriet Goldhor Lerner, quoting an unnamed family of therapist.²⁸

Because women are encouraged to feel guilty about everything--and to take responsibility for all human problems--we often have difficulty sorting out when guilt is there for a good reason.²⁹

Many women who have children and then return to work will say that they feel guilty about their husbands, their children and their consequent distraction from their jobs. Many women feel inadequate if they do not meet all the needs of the people in their lives, and take on an apologetic or an angrily aggressive attitude if they cannot please everyone. Many women live their lives trying to avoid feeling guilty or defining their actions by such guilt. By doing so, they really are simply living out centuries of being defined by the church as guilty for the downfall of humankind.

Women also continue to experience guilt and alienation over their bodies. Pornography and rape, and the laws regarding rape continue to give the world the message that women are sex objects. It is common that blame for "bad" behaviour is given to the woman who can make more money taking off her clothes in a bar than she can working in a factory. It is equally as common that women are blamed for rape because they walk alone at night, wear "enticing" clothing, or "need to be

punished" for their behaviour, which "obviously is just asking for" violence against them. Many women immediately experience guilt after they are attacked, and the first question they ask is "what did I do?"³⁰

Similarly, many women are still troubled by the myth of female perfection. To be "perfectly" beautiful, "perfect" wives, mothers, housekeepers, and career women is the goal. The standards are unattainably high. However,

To be perfect, as defined by the institutional church, is to be like God the controller. If you are perfect, you not only have yourself under control, you also have everything and everyone else under control.³¹

Once women felt guilty for being Eve, then for not being the Virgin Mary, followed by not being perfect and in control of everything they do. This quest for perfection results from women's desire to please men, and the myth that by doing so, they thereby attaining their acceptance and love, and possibly God's forgiveness and love as well.

With this sense of needing to be perfect, some women also desire to be independent (others prefer to feel protected and supported). Yet, often independence is equated with loneliness and lack of support, and sometimes even selfishness. Marriage is still the ideal, although there are many confusing messages out now about what a woman is in marriage--virgin, martyr, saint, or even, the glamorous, charming seductress? Many women continue to practice self-sacrifice in all relationships in return for security and fidelity from partners and children. This behaviour

perpetuates the dependence that is so damaging to self-esteem. As Armstrong illustrates:

Women, however, define themselves in terms of this self-sacrifice--the burden of guilt that this constant self-sacrifice lays upon them. We watched our mothers tiptoeing around our fathers, keeping to the periphery of their lives. We heard how our mothers had sacrificed "everything" to bring us up, though what this "everything" consisted of was left vague.³²

Germaine Greer points out in The Female Eunuch that women think their sacrifice to the husband and family is part of their duty in life. This sacrifice is part of some unspoken bargain, which will insure them against their husbands' desertion and infidelity. Women have seen their own role altruistically and often expect to be rewarded for it. "So long as women live vicariously, through men, they must labour at making themselves indispensable and this is the full-time job that is generally wrongly called altruism."³³

Sacrifice is still seen as the real mission of women. Even today, unmarried women are often told that their lives are selfish, or at least impoverished, something that people would not necessarily say to a male bachelor whose life is often envied.³⁴

One of the wounds of self-sacrifice is a regression back into an infantile state. The responsibility of being a mature and self-aware adult disappears and the woman fails to cope with life in a grown-up manner. It is often easier to defer to someone else and say "I'm happy to do whatever YOU want," than to state her desires honestly. Women find it a significant struggle to discover what their own desires

actually are, and often feel "selfish" to even attempt such a venture. The life of self-sacrifice which defines the way a woman functions in the male world may render her a "child," but also damages others because she learns to use emotional blackmail instead of directly stating her wants and needs. She may deny her own needs verbally, yet be manipulating to the best of her ability to get these same needs met, by a man, usually, or sometimes through children or female friends. Yet, women are encouraged to be martyrs within the patriarchal system, both in church and in family dynamics. Often, they know no other way to claim their needs than through indirect communication, because the label of "selfishness" can, in their minds lead to abandonment, the ultimate fear.

In light of this understanding of church history and theology, it is clear that the impact of patriarchy has not been helpful and indeed, has been harmful to those women and men who were and are specifically searching for understanding of their own lives. Many pastoral issues for women have arisen out of centuries of oppression; it is crucial to understand the church's role in developing women's self-images before any current issues are addressed within the pastoral context. Without this knowledge, there is little or no comprehension of why women in formerly (or presently) Christian-based societies developed emotionally, spiritually and mentally the way they did. Further, it is difficult to begin addressing women's issues within a Christian pastoral context when women know only the patriarchal history fed to

them by the church, dictating much of their thinking and values.

Conclusion

Many women question that authority which has been handed down for generations. There is a growing understanding that women's experiences and the authority structure are often in conflict. The male bias of history and theology within the oral and written "authoritative" tradition has remained mostly hidden until the 19th century. At that time, women began to "see" the difference between their own perspectives and men's. As a result, women began to "do" their own theology, and discover their own history while understanding the psychological effects which this history has had upon them. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, revised various texts in the bible which refer to women directly, and introduced The Woman's Bible, having understood the propensity of men to use the bible against women, to keep women "in their place." In 1895, At the age of eighty-three, she wrote:

The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of women briefly summed up.³⁵

The "second wave" of feminism, which began in the 1960's and continues through the present day, saw the development of feminist theology as a discipline. Women today are engaging in an action/reflection process from which alternative theological insights arise, instead of applying traditional disciplines. In other words, religion is dynamic, rather than merely discourse. Women's theologising does not set a generic rule designed for everyone, but incorporates a body of different experiences into a survey of history (sometimes called "herstory"). Theology remains intentionally subjective for women, and reflects their relationships with God and with each other in Christian community. "Doing" theology begins with experiencing pain and joy in community; thus, pain and joy begins to take on deeper meaning and involvement with God. Making sense of experience in light of Christ's Spirit develops a personal and communal focus for women that transcends traditional roles.

By challenging patriarchal tradition, women learn that they do not need to subscribe to its assumptions. However, women also need to face patriarchal Christianity in terms of its liturgical reinforcement as well as its more subtle presence in pastoral care models. The next two chapters address both these elements of patriarchy within the church.

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CHAPTER THREE: THE PROBLEM OF EXCLUSIVE WORSHIP

Introduction

Christian worship is the response of the human beings to God's presence amongst them. Worship involves ritual and liturgy, song and silence, metaphor and movement.¹ James F. White explores many definitions of worship in his

Introduction to Christian Worship, and offers one of his own:

Called from the world, we come together, deliberately seeking to approach reality at its deepest level by encountering God in and through Jesus Christ and by responding to this awareness.²

By this definition, White emphasises the corporate character of worship, where human beings come together in expectation of meeting God in Christ. In a worship experience, they can encounter the presence of God, and respond as is appropriate for them. White adds a second definition to his first: "Christian worship is speaking and touching in God's name."³ He uses a less abstract definition in his additional sentence, and allows a place for worship to become an experience among people through sense and word. This less formal definition, combined with the understanding that human beings are gathering together intentionally for the purpose of communicating with God and amongst themselves in God's presence provides the basis ^{from} for which I challenge patriarchal worship practices being used in a majority of western churches today. This chapter explores the problems encountered by women during worship.

Marjorie Proctor-Smith goes on to ask further questions of today:

The Impact of Patriarchal Worship upon Women

Worship establishes and develops the relationship amongst human beings and between human beings and the Divine. To participate in meaningful worship is to be open to working on relationship with others and God. This relationship involves celebration, remembrance, penance, healing, self-offering, and proclamation.

For women, relationship with God has often been defined by male understandings of the nature of God combined with male definitions of the role of women, and specific stereotypes from which women need to be healed.⁴ Worship may be meaningful for women on a personal level, but often on a communal level, they find that liturgies and rites have not allowed them to be empowered people, especially in mainline churches. Liturgies remain primarily exclusive in terms of male language and metaphors for God. Format for worship mostly consists of a preacher in the pulpit and a group of listeners in the pews. Response to preaching and prayers is often routine or read from a written script. Thus, worship may not be a setting or event that enables women to be in healthy relationship with community or empower them to establish relationship with God in a manner that differs from men's.

Women have begun to ask questions of the current liturgical movement taking place in the worldwide church. Does the patriarchal claim to "truth" in worship apply to women's lives? Is it true for women living in current times?

Marjorie Proctor-Smith goes on to ask further questions of the liturgies being implemented in the church today:

And if the liturgy claims to reflect centuries of dialogue and relationship between God and people, to what extent does it reflect the full participation of women in that dialogue and relationship? Or is our exclusion from the dialogue part of the process of our victimization? and if women have indeed been excluded from dialogue, what will happen when we join it? That women intend to join the dialogue is clear on all sides. Theological discussions about scripture, tradition, history, and the fundamentals of faith are slowly becoming discussions that are increasingly able to take into account, at last, women's experience, history, and lives.⁵

As women begin to challenge patriarchy, a complex social structure built on the premise that only the free male with property is a citizen, they find that the majority of the population has little civil status or identity of its own. "Husbandless" women and "fatherless" children tend to be without power, status or resources; they become dependent on the "goodwill" of society. Of course, this is the same society that has deprived them of their independent means for survival. Further, if the free male is the normative citizen in a patriarchal social system, the male is seen as the normative human being in any accompanying system of ideas, values, and concerns. This, in turn defines the lens through which worship is developed within the Christian tradition. In other words:

Androcentric reality is constructed and sustained by the subtle means of symbols and language. Language that reflects the assumption that the male is the norm, that 'man' means 'person' and 'person' means 'man,' renders women invisible or marginal.⁶

Mary Daly, in *Beyond God the Father*, also draws attention to Not only does woman remain invisible linguistically today, she often was rendered to second-class or unimportant status when biblical recording of women's stories took place. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza gives an example: at the beginnings of the passion narratives of both Matthew and Mark, Jesus receives a Messianic anointing with oil by a woman disciple (Matt 26. 6-13, Mark 14. 3-9). The men present protest, but Jesus promises the woman that what she had done would be told in her memory wherever the Gospel was proclaimed. However, by the time the Gospels were being written, the woman's name had been forgotten. The woman had performed an easily recognised liturgical act and Jesus' promise to her had also been liturgical (acts of proclamation and remembrance). Yet, there is no trace of this woman in any liturgical action or in commemorations of the passion of Jesus. The liturgies of anointing, if they exist at all, do not remember her, and commentaries often confuse her with Mary of Bethany or Mary Magdalene. The church has not only failed to remember this woman's name, it has also failed to remember the significance of the event, as Luke's redaction of the story shows.⁷ The distortion and diminishment of the event speaks of intentional and selective "forgetting." In fact, this is an example showing that history and tradition are written and retained by those in power, not by those who are oppressed. Suppression of stories and memories that include oppressed people is an essential element in sustaining dominance.

Mary Daly, in Beyond God the Father, also draws attention to how women's invisibility is perpetuated within the church. Theologians and scholars do not directly address or even make themselves aware of issues which women raise. In this way, not only women remain invisible, but the problem of oppression remains invisible as well. Mary Daly says that the issues are often trivialised as less important than other issues such as war and starvation. They also are "particularized."

Particularization is not uncommon among scholars, who frequently miss the point of the movement's critique of patriarchy itself as a system of social arrangements, and become fixated upon one element or pseudo-element of feminist theory as a target for rebuttal. That is, they spend energy answering questions that women are not really asking. An example of this is the labored defense of Paul by Scripture scholars who would have us know that 'the real Paul' was not the author of the objectionable passages against women and was not the all-time male chauvinist . . . The discussion is hardly central to women's concern with the oppressiveness of patriarchal religion.⁸

The point is that for two thousand years, biblical passages have been used to enforce sexual hierarchy instead of being used to build liberated community. In worship, texts which reinforce women's subordination, such as 1 Corinthians 14, or Ephesians 5, are often preached, but one is less likely to hear passages that elevate women as preachers and teachers themselves.⁹ Congregations are told repeatedly that the suffering servant image is the image most significant for the Christian. To add this image to the stereotypes of martyr, saint and motherhood as discussed in chapter two renders women powerless again, but this time through the church's

interpretation and proclamation of Christ's own words (Mark 8.31-33).

Another method cited by Daly for keeping the problem of patriarchy invisible is through spiritualisation.

Spiritualisation is the refusal to look at concrete, oppressive facts.

For example, would-be pacifiers of women seem to be fond of quoting the Pauline text which proclaims that "in Christ there is neither male nor female." This invited the response that even if this were true, the fact is that everywhere else there certainly is [oppression].¹⁰

Again, the Galatian text often is not used as the vision for the church, but as evidence that the church does not have a problem, because the words are incorporated in scripture.

The question remains whether the Galatians text is preached in terms of freedom for the oppressed or whether it is used to "prove" that the church's approach to its people is already emancipatory.

Finally, according to Daly, there is the problem of universalisation. The issue of sexism disappears when the focus becomes a more nebulous human liberation, avoiding confrontation with the whole problem of oppression of women.¹¹ These techniques of avoidance show that women face not only invisibility in their lives but also, in the church, and specifically through worship, a deliberate attempt to keep the whole problem invisible.

Many women are calling for a change in the nature of worship which often rationally sets out patriarchal doctrine as the "correct" belief-system of the church. They no longer

For example, during the announcements at church we hear, find it acceptable to be invisible in the theology and history behind worship, and in worship events themselves. Even proclamation of the good news through liturgies such as baptism and the eucharist, where the spirit brings new freedom and nourishment, can be a message of exclusion and condemnation for women. In churches where women cannot be ordained to preside at these events, they are covertly being told that they are not worthy to bless the sacraments, unlike ordained men. The church has defined its own code of domination in terms of its worship. Rosemary Radford Ruether describes the problem:

The error of historical institutions lies in their attempt to make false claims of spiritual efficacy for purely institutional forms of mediation of words, symbols, and rituals. The institutional church tries to make itself the cause of grace and the means of dispensing the Spirit, rather than simply being the occasion and context where these may take place. It institutionalizes forms of communicating religious meaning, and it pretends that these are the only valid channels of grace. It claims that only the words preached by preachers whom it has designated and whose theology it controls preach a true Word of God, and that only the rituals it validates mediate salvation.¹²

Presence of women in the leadership of worship, especially in terms of the sacrament is one issue facing many churches. Another is the language used within the worship. The majority of language used in liturgy and hymns is male, or reinforces the stereotypes of females. Nancy Hardesty gives an example of the way exclusively male language used generically can, if nothing else, send confusing issues to women.

For example, during the announcements at church we hear, 'Men of the church are invited to a prayer breakfast next Saturday morning.' Women rather quickly figure out that they are not invited. On the other hand, we hear the minister declare, 'Rise up, O men of God, renew your commitment to God.' This time women are not so sure whether or not they are invited. Is this a Father's Day sermon? Or is the minister simply paraphrasing the hymn? And does the hymn include women?¹³

Once the issue of language has been raised, women and some men become increasingly sensitised. Words such as "man," "men," "he," "his," "him," "father," "son," "brethren," "brotherhood" used generically as in "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," found in the eucharistic doxology, begins to mean that men are the norm by which all people are defined in terms of communication with God. At a subtle level, the message for women based on this use of language is that they are supposed to become like men to be closer to God. Men are the truly holy, because they are closest to God; church history has deified this belief, and patriarchal biblical focus alongside exclusively male language has reinforced it.

Hymns such as "Faith of our Fathers," "Good Christian Men, Rejoice," "Now Praise We Great and Famous Men," "Brother Man, Fold to Thy Heart Thy Brother," "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," name a few of the ways the church speaks to both women and men. Sharon Neuffer Emswiler, co-author of Women and Worship, explains the feeling that many women encounter when they attend worship that uses almost entirely male language:

. . . I feel that somehow I must be invisible to this

preacher who has designed this service and now stands in front of me, speaking of the 'the brethren' and telling his congregation to be 'new men.' Following the sermon, the worshippers are invited to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. As the large group of male ushers marches down the aisle to receive the communion elements and distribute them to the congregation, I am suddenly struck with the irony of the situation. The chicken suppers, the ham suppers, the turkey suppers in the church are all prepared and served by the women. But not the Lord's Supper! Yes, it is prepared by the women, but the privilege of serving the Lord's Supper in worship is reserved for the men.¹⁴

This personal description of the author's own reaction to exclusivity in worship shows how women can begin to feel dehumanised by the very event that is meant to proclaim the good news of freedom and wholeness to them and to men.

Language about God is also important to address in worship. Sallie McFague claims that all language that is describing God is metaphorical.

A metaphor is a word or phrase used inappropriately [author's emphasis]. It belongs properly in one context but is being used in another: the arm of the chair, war as a chess game, God the father. From Aristotle until recently, metaphor has been seen mainly as a poetic device to embellish or decorate. . . . Increasingly, however, the idea of metaphor as unsubstitutable is winning acceptance: what a metaphor expresses cannot be said directly or apart from it, for if it could be, one would have said it directly. Here, metaphor is a strategy of desperation, not decoration; it is an attempt to say something about the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, an attempt to speak about what we do not know in terms of what we do know.¹⁵

McFague assumes that all talk of God is necessarily indirect and that no phrases or words can refer directly to God; thus, human beings use words like "Father," as a "detour of description that properly belongs elsewhere."¹⁶ She

continues by stating that the metaphor of father for God has become a model.

A model is a metaphor that has gained sufficient stability and scope so as to present a pattern for relatively comprehensive and coherent explanation. The metaphor of God the father is an excellent example of this. In becoming a model, it has permitted an understanding of many things. If God is seen as father, human beings become children, sin can be understood as rebellious behavior, and redemption can be thought of as a restoration to the status of favored offspring.¹⁷

By adopting "Father" as the primary normative model for God, while resisting "Mother" or other female images, the church has refused to play with the imagination of metaphor. Formulas of orthodoxy and credal pronouncements have defined God as male. Not only does the worship lose an element of creative imagination in insisting on a male God, it also loses the ability to encounter all human experience in relation to God. God-language needs to be representative of all possible relationships, not only Father-son. Mother, Friend, Sister, Brother, are also possibilities for images of God.

The systematic and almost exclusive use of male God-language, in a faith in which God is revealed as incarnate in a male human being, gives a distorted vision of God and supports male dominance in church and society. The distortion goes deep, in liturgies, creeds, hymns and the language of the Bible.¹⁸

There are also other ways in which worship in mainline churches reflects what society believes to be stereotypically masculine.

The worship in these churches is reasoned, intellectual, and often cold, lacking the emotional warmth and spontaneity more common to the feminine experience. When the presence and participation of women is reflected in the liturgy or in the sermon, it is done in a patronizing and condescending manner, assuming stereotyped roles for us in the family, Church and society. Women are not recognized as mature adults with abilities and interests as great and varied as those of men.¹⁹

include meaningful images for women in liturgy and language.

Through worship, women have received the message that they are passive recipients of the word and sacrament from the patriarchal institution. They also are told through language and biblical interpretation that they are connected to a male God through men. Response to God's presence during worship, therefore, can be increasingly problematic for women, as God seems to become more and more distant from their own life-experience. Only by challenging patriarchal church history and theology will women begin to break through the barrier of male domination and become free to develop their own way of being with God. They too may introduce possibilities of alternative relationships between men and God by expanding symbol and metaphor and liturgical movement in worship where all people come together in community.

Conclusion

Worship involves emotion, thought, experience and perception. Language and symbolism either enhance the worship event or impede connection with God and community. For women, worship has for centuries focused on the worthiness of men and their direct connection to God through their direct participation in sacraments and through

masculine language. Presently, many women are turning to alternative ways of worshipping outside the traditional church services on Sunday, so that they can find liturgies and symbolism meaningful for their life-experience. Others are challenging the church to expand its view of God and include meaningful images for women in liturgy and language. As women find new understandings of God and relationship based on inclusivity and mutuality, they have the potential to bring about significant change in the very nature of the church.

The next chapter looks at the final aspect dealt with in this research in terms of the church's patriarchal approach to its people. Traditional psychological models have been used in the field of pastoral counselling, which in turn informs the pastoral care women and men encounter in the church. Again, tradition has placed women in a subordinate role in a pastoral care context. Women, however, can find an alternative to this role as they work through the patriarchal stereotypes and define their own ways of relating and living as Christians.

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ENDNOTES

1. See Appendix One for definitions of "worship."
2. White, James F. Introduction to Christian Worship, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986. p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 22.
4. See Chapter Two for female roles and stereotypes.
5. Proctor-Smith, Marjorie. In Her Own Rite: Constructing a Feminist Liturgical Tradition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. p. 14.
6. Ibid., p. 16.
7. Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1983. pp. 152-154.
8. Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father. London: The Women's Press, 1991. p. 5.
9. See for example, Matthew 15. 21-28, Luke 10. 38-42, Luke 8. 1-2, Luke 24. 10, John 4. 4-26, John 11. 28-44, Acts 18.
10. op. cit., p. 5.
11. Daly, p. 5.
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CHAPTER FOUR: TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PASTORAL COUNSELLING AS IT AFFECTS WOMEN

Introduction

I have shown through a survey of church history and worship that patriarchal theology and historical bias have been contributory factors in women's negative self-image and lack of well-being; an understanding of this history and theology is important to share with women so that they begin to understand how it has shaped their thinking. Now, I will look at the impact of psychology on women, especially in terms of its use in the church through pastoral counselling. I am not concerned so much with surveying the history of psychology or pastoral counselling as illustrating a common thread affecting women in both disciplines, which are increasingly merging within the church. I begin by describing the tension created when patriarchal psychology becomes the basis for a pastoral counselling model.

Psychology as an element of Pastoral Counselling

The psychological field bases most of its counselling techniques on the use of individual sessions. Those who adopt psychological models as part of the discipline of pastoral counselling within the context of the church often also adopt counselling on a one-to-one basis. Thus, counselling can be described as a specific act of therapeutic-style conversation that is based on psychological

or theological perspectives, or both. This kind of counselling emphasises a situation where one expert works with one patient or "counsellor" to find a solution to a problem. The counselling model becomes a medical model, complete with diagnosis and plan for recovery.

Presently, this trend increasingly separates pastoral counselling from the community focus of the church.¹ R. A. Lambourne, a British pastoral counsellor himself, contended that a problem-solving, problem-preventing professionalism, which is standardised and defined, disconnects the church from its communal, life-experimental, and varied pastoral theology.² "Pastoral theology has been over-influenced by the puzzle-solving view of human progress - a 'hang up' theology which fits only too closely with the medical clinical professional identity."³ Howard Clinebell agrees that the community cannot be forgotten when a pastor counsels, though he emphasises that psychological training is very valuable in individual or family counselling. He claims that lack of psychological training may lead to damaging instead of helpful encounters.⁴

Both men do understand that the community is an essential element in care-giving within the church, though Lambourne claims that emphasis on community needs to be primary so that the sense of human connection is not lost in the individualistic counselling model.

A. V. Campbell also stresses relationship and community within the pastoral counselling situation. He adds that neither the Christian tradition of pastoral care-giving

through sacrament and confession nor psychology alone can address the pastoral needs of people today.⁵ He claims that the historical influence of church on society in previous centuries and the increasing secularisation of society in the twentieth century leads pastoral counsellors to understand the human condition in new ways. Indeed, people's problems often do not have a religious frame of reference any longer, whether they attend church or not. Church-goers may find that the church does not address their daily concerns, and they may not expect church leaders to know most aspects of their lives as church officials seemed to do a century ago. To take Campbell's argument one step further, church leaders need to recognise that there is a great diversity of lifestyle present especially in the urban churches today. As society has increased its focus on individual gain and satisfaction, the concept of community has diminished. So, not only is the minister increasingly thought of as a specialist in pastoral counselling, she or he is facing a congregation that more often than not, is an aggregate of individuals instead of a cohesive group.

This diversity and individualism is found in both perceptions of the world and in lifestyle; often people's needs cannot be met on a uniform basis or formula which many pastoral care-givers establish. Indeed, because needs have become so varied, it is difficult to approach a congregation today as a pastoral group, either informally or in worship. With this diversity in mind, it is tempting for modern-day pastoral care-givers to adopt a psychological counselling

model which is based on individual exchanges instead of an alternative, relational paradigm, which allows a pastor to minister to community, or community-within-community effectively.

Thus, pastoral counselling with a medical model as its basis, has potential to keep community fragmented. Individual conversation may affect the community indirectly through change in one person, but it does not allow the community to become part of the process of change. Earl Schelp and Ronald Sunderland observe that church-goers begin to believe that they are excused from many congregational tasks and become spectators in both worship and caring situations when the pastoral care-giver functions on an individual level.⁶ The church becomes fragmented, and connections break down. Community is replaced by small groups or individuals gathering together on Sundays, with little else to do with the spiritual life of the congregation. This dilemma contradicts the nature of the church as koinonia, establishes a hierarchy of "expert" and subordinate seeking help, as well as providing unique problems for women, who often spend their lives trying to build community, as I will show.

The Impact of Psychology on Women

The church encounters a problem with the medical model. It faces increased fragmentation and hierarchical division when psychological techniques replace community caring. In addition, the church faces another dilemma when it bases

pastoral care exclusively on psychology or on historical pastoral models. As outlined in chapter two, the history of the church's treatment of women has had a negative impact on them. This history provides a problem for a pastoral caregiver if she or he is focusing specifically on women's issues. There are few, if any, recorded historical traditions available that treat women pastorally outside a patriarchal understanding (other than Jesus' presence with women in the bible, which is rarely addressed in traditional theological circles). Thus there is room for developing an alternative focus on history and psychology in terms of pastoral counselling for women. First, however, it will be helpful to look more closely at the field of psychology and how it too reinforces this historical male bias toward women.

Like the historical theological approach, the psychological approach to pastoral care ignores the tendency to relegate women to the position of "incomplete male" at worst, and not worth specific attention at best. Until the 1970's, very little research had been conducted with women's psyches and values in mind. Even today, a field of "women's psychology" is still only in an embryonic stage.

Recent scholarship in the field of psychology has revealed that the female and male characters develop in unique ways. Until recently, studies in psychology have indicated that the male development is the norm for all people, and that female development somehow shows a lack of maturity, because it does not follow the male "path." Psychological theorists have fallen into observational bias, as Carol Gilligan points out:

Implicitly adopting the male life as the norm, they have tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth. It all goes back to Adam and Eve - a story which shows, among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble. In the life cycle, as in the Garden of Eden, the woman has been the deviant.

The tendency to project a masculine image on women goes back to the beginning of psychological science, when Freud developed his theory of psychosexual development around experiences of the male. His theory came to be known as the Oedipus Complex, where a child (male, in Freud's understanding), wished to possess sexually the parent of the opposite sex, while excluding the parent of the same sex. Freud, however, saw that female children did not fit his theory because they consistently retained attachments to their mothers in the pre-Oedipal phase, just as males did. He concluded that this difference in early female development was an aberration. He developed this theory further by basing his psychological model on biology; he assumed that young girls thought of themselves as boys until they observed the anatomic difference, at which point they realised that they were "missing something." He also assumed that girls envied boys their biology and thought boys superior because of their "extra appendage."⁸ The girl developed castration anxiety, according to Freud, and turned away from the "defective" mother to the "more perfect" father, who possessed a penis. Thus, entry into the Oedipal phase occurred, but only to avoid the terror of castration anxiety. Freud concluded as a result that girls were naturally of

weaker super-ego (unconscious part of the brain that directs conscious mind), and faced a future of poor critical judgment. He considered women morally inferior to men, for biological reasons:

In girls, the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking. Castration has already had its effect, which was to force the child into the situation of the Oedipus complex . . . I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their superego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character-traits which critics of every epoch have brought us against women -- that they have less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great experience of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility -- all of this would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of the superego which we have inferred above.⁹

This approach to analysing women and men became known as biologic-drive theory, the foundation for psychoanalysis.

It was as though, for Freud, women had no other stirring independent of the father and his penis, no desire arising from their own biological and social being including that involved in mothering. He entirely neglected the way desire is transmitted to the daughter, among other things, by the mother's desire, or its lack . . .¹⁰

That women were morally weaker than men was not Freud's unique conclusion, but a perspective long passed-on within the Judeo-Christian culture. Freud simply reinforced this view through a new discipline, psychology. Unfortunately, Freud's theory was developed further in the 1930's and 40's, into an opinion that females, supposedly passive, take pleasure in being subordinate to males. Because females see themselves as inherently inferior, they are apt to assume the

stance of the wounded, victimised being whose primary satisfaction derives from "having" a man.¹¹

Many theories describing the nature of women which developed in the 1920's - 1940's reinforced stereotypes of women's inherent inferiority because of biological make-up. However, Karen Horney, Melanie Klein, Anna Freud and Helen Deutsch, early psychologists with a knowledge of Freud's work, used identification with mother and mothering as the basis for their psychoanalytic theories.

Helen Deutsch focused on her own experience of dislike for her mother and personal difficulty in mothering herself. She attributed this difficulty to social devaluation of women and mothering, thereby exposing women's negative views about their own sexuality and self-esteem. Nonetheless, like Freud, Deutsch attributed the first stage of a girl's sexuality as phallic. Like him, she went on to argue that the girl abandons the phallic or active phase of her sexuality as a result of recognising her lack of penis, in favour of the complementary passive sexuality. In adolescence, desire for sexual intercourse became a means of gaining both a penis and a baby; the latter enables a woman to recreate the relationship they first had with their mothers. Thus, Deutsch adopted the Freudian view of sexuality, but went one step beyond by focusing on adolescence and motherhood instead of only men and children.

Karen Horney went one step further than Deutsch and celebrated mothering and femininity for its own sake. She particularly opposed Freud's theory of penis envy as a basis

for women's psychology. She claimed that women's psychological make-up was determined by identification with the mother, not by disappointed identification with the father. She also believed that men experienced some envy of women's mothering capacities.

Horney believed that women could become self-sufficient individualists. She herself had a good relationship with her mother and enjoyed motherhood, which alerted her to men's attitudes toward mothering. She believed that women's character disorders, such as striving for love and power, resulted from childhood hurts caused by parental narcissism and abuse.¹²

Anna Freud focused less on her experience with her mother than she did on her father's theories. She described women's altruistic surrender to male domination and the obverse, identification with the aggressor through work with female adolescent beating fantasies. Anna Freud pioneered work in child analysis and eventually drew attention to the maternal environment she thought necessary for children's emotional, social and language development. However, she never dispensed with her father's identification of the Oedipal complex, and turned her back on a women-based view of psychoanalysis in favour of child psychology.

Melanie Klein began analytic work in terms of her own relationship with her mother and her children. She discovered a child's early Oedipal rivalry with and envy of a mother's sexual relation with the father. She extended Freud's account of the unconscious by focusing on the

paradoxical combinations of love and hate, incorporation and expulsion, destruction and reparation and triumph and control.¹³ Klein's work combines all four women's use of mothering experience and adds a completely new element to psychoanalytic theory neglected by Freud. Her focus became psychoanalytic treatment of schizoid personality splitting and depression.

In the process of developing their own theories, all four women gave attention to mother-centred psychoanalysis. Klein especially viewed mother-child identification as an important part of development for the child. All four became centralised over the issue of individuation of self from other (initially from mother) while Freud was concerned with adaptation of individual instinct and desire to social and patriarchal pressure.¹⁴ The problem with the four researchers' theories is that they all assume that individuation occurs when the child separates from the mother by flight to the father. None of the women give much attention to the way conscious and unconscious mental life is shaped by patriarchal authority and sexual differences, and spend little or no time on the influence of a father's presence or absence in women's lives.

In the late 1960's, during the second wave of the feminist movement, a number of researchers and theorists in the field of psychology began to see that sex discrimination and patriarchal bias limited women's potential far more than Freud's belief in inherent inferiority or Klein's, Anna Freud's, Deutsch's and Horney's beliefs in individuation from

mothers. Earlier in the century, theory had been translated into a problem with women's development, based on their biology and their consequential dealing with relationships. Nancy Chodorow challenged this thinking by asserting that differences between sexual development occurred not because of anatomy, but because of women's responsibility for child care. This approach is known as object-relations theory. The early social environment differed for the male and female child. Female identity forms in ongoing relationship with the mother (primary care-taker), while male identity forms from separation issues based on identifying sexual difference. Thus, Chodorow concludes that "mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with themselves. . . [and] mothers experience their sons as a male opposite."¹⁵ Likewise, girls experience themselves as like their mothers, and form attachments with them, while boys sense their difference, and pursue separate identities. Chodorow directly challenges Freud's contention that women are weaker morally and have less well-defined ego-boundaries; she adopts Freud's pre-Oedipal understanding, but contends that girls emerge from this stage with a clearer understanding of empathy built into their definitions of self than boys.¹⁶ Thus, for Chodorow, issues of dependency and relationship-building are different for women and men. Separation and individuation are part of sex identity for men, because masculinity has in part come to be defined as separation from mother. Feminine identity does not depend on the same kind of separation or individuation, but instead on

attachment and intimacy. Thus, according to Chodorow, the female failure to "separate" has become by male-biased definition a failure to develop completely.

Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and Jean Baker Miller, psychologists and researchers, continue to describe sets of characteristics that are particular to women. These traits identify women as "relational," with a sense of selfhood that is based on caring and relationships. They each, however, attempt to identify the sexist assumptions that relegate women to caring roles, and turn the assumptions on their head by claiming that women's relational qualities are both positive and even necessary for the survival of the world. Gilligan cites a long list of experiments conducted to study psychological development of males and females, based on male assumptions and sometimes entirely on male target groups. In particular, she takes studies conducted by psychologists Jean Piaget, Janet Lever and Lawrence Kohlberg on childhood moral development through game-playing, and shows that the interpretation of the experiments are inherently biased against girls.¹⁷ Girls developed a sensitivity for others' feelings during game-playing, while boys concentrated on the legal elaboration of rules. If an argument broke out during the game, the boys would re-play, whereas girls tended to end the game in deference to their relationships. Further, the studies showed that girls were more likely to enjoy competitive games that did not depend on one person's success being another's failure, such as jumping rope. Lever and Piaget both concluded from these findings that boys were

developing professional qualities and moral learning, while girls were left in dependent roles with little moral boundary-building.¹⁸

Kohlberg's study describes the path to moral development, based on six stages of maturing which eighty-four boys, exhibited over the period of twenty years. He claims that his male samples produced universal conclusions and found that women are prominently deficient in moral development on his scale. It follows that for Kohlberg, women seem to portray characteristics of incomplete development, where morality is perceived as "good" when pleasing and helping others. They do not continue to the stages of subordinating relationships to rules and finally, subordinating rules to universal principles of justice, as men seemed to do. The traditional roles of wife and mother were therefore considered to be quite suitable for women.¹⁹

Gilligan aptly points out the paradox which emerges from these studies.

. . .for the very traits that have traditionally defined the 'goodness' of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development. In this version of moral development, however, the conception of maturity is derived from the study of men's lives and reflects the importance of individuation in their development . . . When one begins with the study of women and derives developmental constructs from their lives, the outline of a moral conception different from that described by Freud, Piaget, or Kohlberg begins to emerge and informs a different description of development. In this conception, the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative, rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality, as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and

relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules.²⁰

Nel Noddings approaches the aspect of women and relationships from a different angle. She explores the problem of women and evil from both a theological and psychological point of view. She claims first that there is a paradox in the dichotomous view of woman as evil (because of her attraction to matters of the flesh) and good (because of her compassion and nurturing); through this paradox women are controlled. They believe that they are good when they live lives of service and obedience. However, within this "goodness," women often feel a pervasive fear of separation, pain, and helplessness.²¹ These three states of being are often what women consider to be evil.

Noddings argues that women's experience leads to an emphasis on relatedness as a basis for moral thinking and action. Yet, there is also the struggle that most women face which involves trying to keep relationships from being damaged or neglected. First, there exists a male-induced ethic of individualism in the western world, often involving separation, creating rivalries and making enemies. Many women, on the other hand, often are mediators, especially in the family context. They have learned to please and to interpret, all for the sake of peace and re-establishing loving relationships. Historically, women have been "assigned" this duty in the past, and do not see their constant attempts at meaningful connection as a virtue.²²

Second, Noddings points at a theological cause for psychological separation.

Another force in our neglect of human relations has been religion. The notion that salvation rests in our relation to God and not in our relation to other human beings has often led to a devaluation of persons and a tendency to place those with whom we differ outside the moral community."²³

Finally, Noddings identifies a third problem that leads to the neglect of relationship - the fear of being a woman.

Sometimes, for example, women adopt a different perspective than what might be their own, because they want to "belong."

They have internalized a large part of what men have taught them about being a good woman. An important virtue of the good woman, pointed up dramatically and unfortunately in the writings of Jung's followers, is her generous support of her man's conception of honor. A good woman in this view does not undermine her man's sense of honor and duty. Her virtues complement his.²⁴

Oppression, a state of being dominated to the detriment of one's physical, mental and spiritual health, affects women in many different ways. Group participation allows women to define oppression for them as women, against the background of patriarchy. Gender socialisation gives women the serving roles, defines for women how they "should" look and act, and negatively affects their self-esteem. Claire Wintram and Sandra Butler outline several life-factors that affect women's experience and illustrate the depth of their oppression; experience of physical and mental health, economic position, civil status, multiple crises, caring responsibilities, education, drugs/alcohol misuse and

violence all affect how women function in the world.²⁵ Add to these experiences a lack of understanding from many male care-givers in the church, and women face another wall of oppression. Often, when several of the factors listed are debilitating, low self-esteem comes into play. Pressures from children, men, other women, and discriminatory practices within caring professional groups, finances/banks, police, and service industries can lead to a sense of being out of control, juggling the demands in a reactive fashion, just to survive. Many women suffer from depression when the cycle of demands never seems to cease. Consequently, they are labelled "unable to cope."

If women's health is permanently unsound, this in itself is adequate explanation for their discomfort in the world. Broverman and her colleagues examined the sex-role stereotypes of a group of mental health professionals, asking them to define mentally healthy men, women and adults.

The characteristics of the mentally healthy adult corresponded closely with those of the mentally healthy man. Women, on the other hand, were perceived as different from the healthy adult because they were more submissive, less adventurous, more easily influenced, more emotional and excitable in minor crises, less competitive and aggressive than their male counterparts. This constellation of factors renders women vulnerable to being labelled as neurotic and mentally disturbed because such characteristics are not perceived as mentally healthy . . . Responsibility is pushed back on to them to adapt their own shape to fit better into spaces in the world that do not accommodate either their needs or their skills.²⁶

Women face the problem of fighting to be who they are outwith the context of domination and subordination; to do

so, they struggle to create for themselves a new concept of personhood. They are attempting to restructure central tenets of their lives. This effort extends into the deepest inner reaches, where women create new concepts of what it means to be a person after learning to resist the old internal and external expectations and demands.

Finding an Alternative for Pastoral Care for Women

I have shown that the contrasting styles of pastoral counselling on the one hand, and psychology on the other, are being connected increasingly within the church's understanding of pastoral care models. The medical model promoted by psychology, in addition to the problems of negative assumptions developed about women in the discipline, lead to the question of whether this model is effective for the church.

Carl Rogers' client-centred therapy, which is nondirective in nature, attempts to release counselling from a strictly diagnostic, medical model. In other words, this therapy does not direct an individual to a traditional theory so that her or his problem will be solved. Instead, Rogers focuses on the client's conversation with the therapist as the primary way to bring about an emotional or functional change that is useful to the client. Nondirective, or client-centred therapy also requires that the therapist does not project her or his own philosophy and goals onto the client. This approach does not proceed from traditional personality theory such as Freudian or Jungian thought, but asks the client to

take some responsibility in self-analysis.²⁷ Client-centred therapy involves the therapist in attempting to take on the client's frame of reference. Rogers rightly says:

In a therapeutic relationship in which the therapist enters, as a person, making interpretations, evaluating the significance of the material, and the like, his [sic] distortions enter with him. In a therapeutic relationship where the therapist endeavors to keep himself out, as a separate person, and where his whole endeavor is to understand the other so completely that he becomes almost an alter ego of the client, personal distortions and maladjustments are much less likely to occur.²⁸

Rogers' view of client-centred therapy is helpful in terms of easing the rigidity of the dominant/subordinate structure of the medical model. Indeed, he is willing to dispense with the one-on-one model and promote therapy through group work when occasions call for it.²⁹ However, despite this alternative model for therapy, Rogers never challenges inherent patriarchal thinking most therapists learn in training and live with in every aspect of their lives. Thus, even as "alter ego" to the client(s), the therapist may not see the underlying problems that patriarchy has brought about for women and men. Nondirective therapy does not take into account the patriarchal context in which both client and therapist live on a daily basis; it simply focuses on the client's immediate experience. There is little room for education about a theological and social system that may be a major cause for many people's sense of being ill at ease. Further, Rogers does not address the need for community in ongoing relationship, even after formal therapeutic

conversation has stopped. Client-centred therapy does just what its title implies: centres on the client.

There is no thought of developing or discovering a larger interpersonal context of a fuller functioning community through which congruence and openness could be nourished.

. . . If there is any optimism in Rogers' interpretation of man [sic], it is his assumption that the single individual who has once experienced the power of acceptance can fend for himself in an estranged world without a continuing community of confession, education, witness and life together.³⁰

Whether women encounter pastoral counselling which is based on traditional psychology or client-centred therapy, they are most likely to find themselves in situations where they are seeking help as individuals from another individual, usually the minister or priest. This situation sets up a hierarchical relationship between the care-giver and the woman seeking counsel, which reinforces the dominant/subordinate position women experience in almost all areas of their lives. Even in a therapeutic group, if traditional psychological understandings of women's roles are assumed, the members are unlikely to be heard in terms of their female experience.

There is an alternative way of encountering women which addresses the problem of isolation, hierarchical or patriarchal-based counselling situations, while incorporating a sense of community and an understanding of women's issues: feminist group work. Women are best-served pastorally by building relationships and exploring self and God in a group or small community of other women. One reason for this claim is that, for a woman, whether or not she is experiencing

crisis and seeking help from an individual counsellor, there is need for a safety net of support to surround her. By breaking down a woman's isolation and sense of secrecy which may develop behind the closed door of a counsellor's office or vestry, she can find strength through common experience with others.

When women are in individual counselling situations without some kind of community support, they may begin to feel as if they need to hide their pain, confusion and fear. Often, once women discover that many others struggle too, their own situations become much clearer and they find that support helps them to deal with the problem in their own ways. Community is essential to women's healthy living; women focus on relationship, which is often the starting point for women to see themselves more clearly while finding their own authority. Through the simple act of sharing stories, women build relationship and empathy with each other.

A second reason that group work is crucial for women within the church stems from a need for new understanding of "community." The community which exists is fragmented as I showed earlier, but it also is still under historical and social assumptions that have guided it for centuries. This kind of community is not helpful to women. Within it, women still are in the position of being the servers and the helpers, and still must fight the stereotypes that relegate them to non-leadership and essentially, non-affirming roles. Indeed, some churches have taken an open stance on the "place" of women, declaring that women have no inherent right

or talent for leadership within the church. In this kind of setting, chances are good that women will not experience affirming relationship or personal support when seeking by counsel. Further, the argument that pastoral counselling is based on a community framework as Lambourne and to a lesser extent, Clinebell claim, calls into question who is task or benefitting from this community. To benefit from community, women must first find their own space within it to define and their needs and wants. Group work together facilitates this space and provides place where women can begin to explore personal authority.

Personal authority is the ability to validate one's own thoughts and actions as good and true. It develops gradually as others recognise and communicate the value of one's ideas and contributions, both for the family and for the larger social group. Our society designates authority symbolically by conferring decision-making influence, social status, and power over material resources. These are typically not associated with women or women's work.³¹

Conclusion

Group work for women is crucial for women to begin to find their own place in history and the church as well as finding their own strength. Women together begin to question the assumptions that centuries of history have designated to women's character and personality. The problems of patriarchy, hierarchy, and stereotyping all will be called into the question as women share experience and develop their own networks.

Group work also provides a smaller model for what church community as a whole has the potential to become. The

koinonia which Paul hopes for while addressing the early churches exhibits similar aims and characteristics as the group work to be introduced here. Reconciled community, by its very nature, calls for people to listen to each other, affirm different talents, support each other, and find a way to bring about unity through diversity. This is the task of the church. In modern times, I claim that this task can be best accomplished through the following paradigm, as outlined in the next chapter.

5. Campbell, A. V., *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981. p. 5.
6. Schelp, Earl E. and Ronald S. Swendsen, *The Pastor as Counselor*. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1991. p. 2.
7. Gilligan, Carol, *In a Different Voice*. Harvard University Press, 1982. p. 9.
8. See Freud, Sigmund, 1922, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Writings of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 19, pp. 257-268, ed. James Strachey et al., London: Hogarth Press, 1957-1973. pp. 248-258.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258.
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11. See Deutsch, Helen, "The Psychology of Women in Relation to the Functions of Reproduction," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. VI, 1925, pp. 405-418.
12. Sayers, pp. 93-94.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
15. Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. pp. 150, 156.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
17. Gilligan, pp. 9-11.

ENDNOTES

1. See where Howard Clinebell and R. A. Lambourne debate the significance of psychology in training for the pastoral ministry, in Clinebell, Howard, "Debate: A National Pastoral Organisation," Contact 36, November, 1971; Lambourne, R. A., "Objections to a National Pastoral Organisation," Contact 35, June, 1971.
2. Lambourne, R. A., "Objections to a National Pastoral Organisation," Contact 35, June 1971. p. 26.
3. Ibid., p. 27.
4. Clinebell, Howard, "Debate: A National Pastoral Organisation," Contact 36, November, 1971. p. 28.
5. Campbell, A. V., Rediscovering Pastoral Care. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981. p. 5.
6. Schelp, Earl E. and Ronald H. Sunderland, The Pastor as Counselor. New York: The Pilgrim's Press, 1991. p. 2.
7. Gilligan, Carol, In a Different Voice, Harvard University Press, 1982. p. 6.
8. See Freud, Sigmund, 1925, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Writings of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 19, pp. 257-258, ed. James Strachay et al., London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974. pp. 248-258.
9. Ibid., pp. 257-258.
10. Sayers, Janet. Mothers of Psychoanalysis. New York: W. Norton & Co., 1991. p. 12.
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13. Ibid., p. 19.
14. Ibid., p. 262.
15. Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. pp. 150, 166.
16. Ibid., p. 167.
17. Gilligan, pp. 9-11.

18. Ibid., p. 10.
19. Ibid., p. 18.
20. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
21. Noddings, Nel. Women and Evil. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. p. 3.
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23. Ibid., p. 204.
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25. Butler, Sandra and Claire Wintram. Feminist Groupwork. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1991. pp. 9-10.
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CHAPTER FIVE: BUILDING KOINONIA THROUGH GROUP WORK

Introduction

Group work as a form of caring and discovering new aspects about oneself and others is a significant way to find empowerment. Participating in group discussion and worship also breaks down feelings of isolation; human beings can build self-esteem and confidence in a healthy, non-hierarchical manner. A group can determine where its own conversation is directed and develops its own ways of defining power. However, group members also need to take responsibility for themselves and for speaking up about events or opinions by which they are troubled.

A group can become an identity in itself, based on the nature of the relationships established within it. This identity takes shape based on a framework of security and trust, as well as new experience and challenge. This research promotes therapeutic group work as a basis for building small communities, and ultimately, koinonia in the church.

A Journey Toward Liberation in the Church: Forming koinonia

In this thesis, I develop a paradigm for the journey toward liberation for women and men in the local church, as the first step toward emancipation for all people in the worldwide church. The following diagram shows what this journey might look like in the initial years of movement

toward liberation (See Diagram 1). The ecclesia is the body of the church where all people gather together as community. Branching from this body are single-sex groups where women and men meet and share experiences and thoughts about life-situations and the influence of patriarchy upon their lives. Each of these groups worships together in ways that are helpful to them, acknowledging God's presence in their journey together. When they feel strong and unified as community within these separate groups, they are called then to come together to speak and listen to each other's concerns and hopes. As dialogue between groups takes place, and if each group is willing to listen to and work with the other, koinonia forms, and the church begins to change to a place where women and men live out the commandment to love God, one another and themselves.

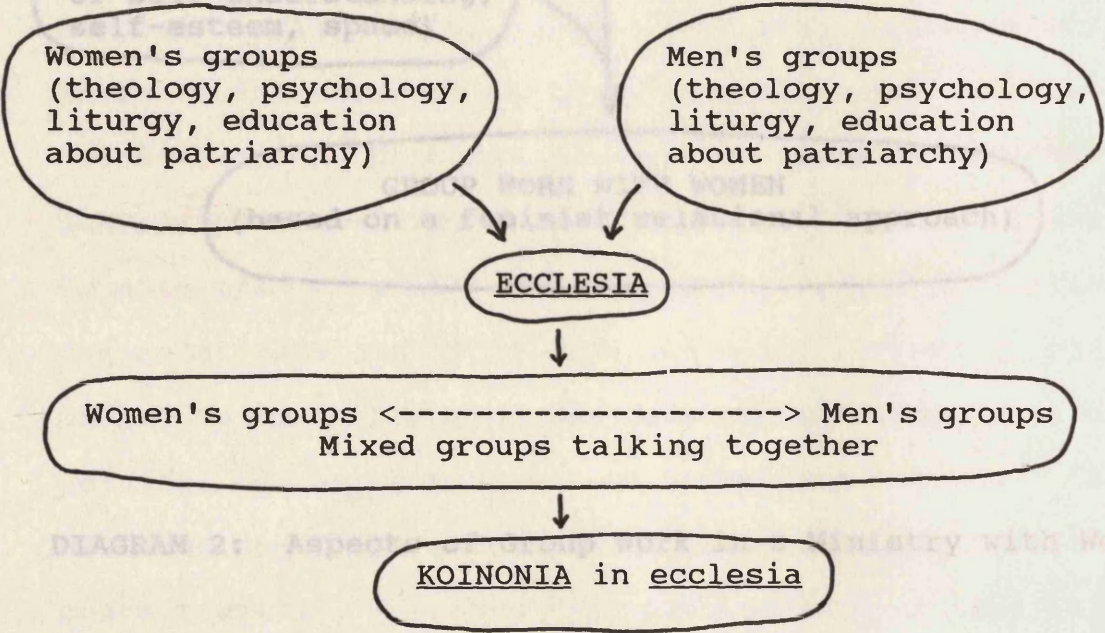


DIAGRAM 1: A Paradigm for Building koinonia in ecclesia

My primary focus in the research is the first step of the paradigm. This step involves women coming together in their own group(s) in addition to taking part in the mainstream of the church's life. These groups focus primarily on a ministry for women, involving input primarily from church history and feminist theology, feminist psychology and emancipatory worship (See Diagram 2).

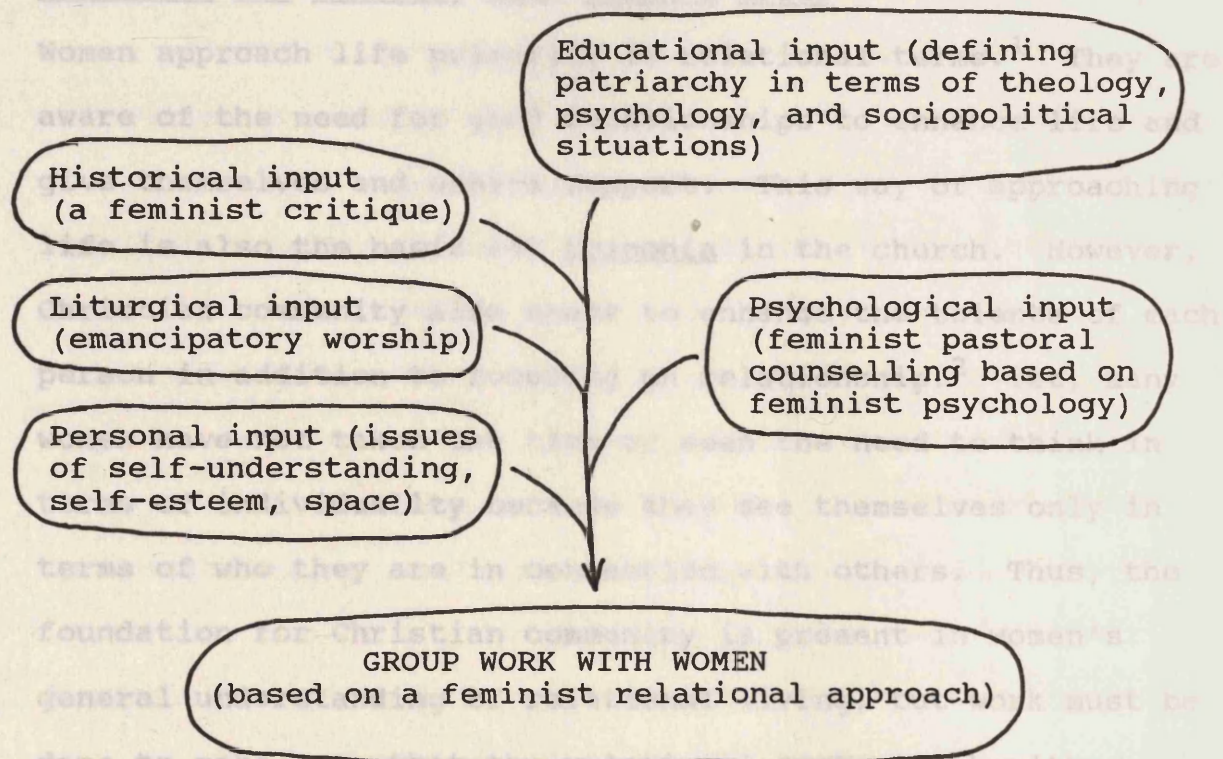


DIAGRAM 2: Aspects of Group Work in a Ministry with Women

This section of the diagram promotes affirmation of women in the church and also outlines the input that effectively addresses women's issues. Group work, in turn, leads to a challenge to the patriarchal system. However, there is provision for a transition time, where women meet together as women while continuing to function in the wider church in spite of many negative effects it may have on women.

Rationale for Ministry with Women's Group

Women approach life primarily in relational terms.¹ They are aware of the need for good relationships to enhance life and give themselves and others support. This way of approaching life is also the basis for koinonia in the church. However, Christian community also needs to enhance the talents of each person in addition to focusing on relationship.² Yet, many women have not taken the time or seen the need to think in terms of individuality because they see themselves only in terms of who they are in connection with others. Thus, the foundation for Christian community is present in women's general understanding of relational living, but work must be done to make sure that the relational system is healthy.

A relational system of care and unity is what koinonia is called to be.³ Starting the journey with women toward this emancipated church begins with group work together. A group of women can focus on care for human beings in the Christian context easily, for they have devoted much of their lives to this endeavour outwith and possibly within the church.

However, the group work also needs to challenge women to look

at their relationships and the basis for their care-giving through a different lens. If groups adopt a feminist⁴ understanding of self and relationship, their members may begin to see that often their relationships are based on being in a subordinate position in church and society, with the possible exception of female friendship.

The context of a woman-only group is one of relationship and co-operation. There also is a sense of equality and mutuality that develops as the members move together through times of action, reflection, and action again. The reflection process which occurs together allows a new freedom for most women, who learn to feel less threatened about sharing; however, there may be women who do not overcome the sense that some judgment may occur if they share deeply. They believe that the risk of rejection is too great.

Feminist group work requires an understanding of feminist theory. Issues of women's invisibility, oppression, self-understanding and self-esteem become crucial topics for women to address within a group. Before they can develop their own descriptions of themselves, women need space and opportunity to shed the definitions patriarchy has put upon them. "There is a discernable pattern within feminist work which addresses the invisibility of women's experience and knowledge in domestic and public spheres, and redresses this injustice by reclaiming women's own history and language."⁵ Women learn not to trust their own reactions because they may believe they are not of worth to themselves or anyone else. The result of this lack of self-trust is inconsistent and self-

destructive behaviour. Women blame themselves for relationships that do not function in a healthy manner, and may try to control themselves, their environments and other people because they feel so out of control. The belief that women can take control of their own destinies in however limited a way may never have been nurtured in them.

The increased visibility of all women involves a recognition that each woman can experience marginalisation and isolation. When women share this sense of being alone and lonely in their life-situations, they begin to discover common ground and the isolated feeling begins to diminish.

Group work in a feminist framework also allows for collective positive feedback.

Sustained attempts should be made to pin-point and nurture women's capacity to recognise and validate the strengths and positive qualities in each other, and as an extension of this, but far more difficult to achieve, to begin to make similar statements about themselves.⁶

When women come together and create their own value systems and world-views, there is scope for counteracting this oppression; women may choose to shift away from patriarchal expectations and role definitions and find their own way of functioning. To do this, they need support, and a flexible feminist frame of reference from which to work.

The Methodology of Women's Group Work

While a group takes on a feminist viewpoint from which to learn new ways of interacting with the church and the world, members also focus on relationship-building within the group.

Women often adopt care-giving roles within groups and are anxious to "help" each other with their problems. They spend time developing trusting relationships if possible. If members of the group find that they can trust each other, they will learn to share experiences and problems in what has become a "safe place." This sharing deepens the relationships even further. As group members grow closer, hopefully they become better able to deal with pain and conflict amongst themselves, and the group may develop an increasingly flexible and strong identity.

When women develop deep relationships in the group setting and also confront the patriarchal system that has affected them all their lives, they may begin to share painful experiences that they live with presently or have lived through in the past. If the group is able to affirm any woman who shares these events or problems in their lives, the woman gains confidence in herself and in those around her. A rise in self-esteem is often accompanied by a consequent change in life-circumstance or destructive relationship(s) that a woman might have. With each change, the group can celebrate, and the esteem of the group as an identity also begins to rise.

As group identity becomes solidarity through common experience or shared understanding of what women encounter in the church and the world,⁷ the group is strong enough to begin challenging the patriarchal system in which they live. Further, the group itself becomes a vital example of how the relational model, available to the whole church community,

operates.

When women come together to discover and share their own experiences and to learn that their experience is authoritative for them, they recognise that particular issues must be addressed before growth can occur in relationship with God. When women begin to hear each other on their own terms, they find new horizons and new forms of expression that build awareness of past and present oppression, and potential freedom for the future. Because women have been socialised to discount their own feelings and responses, the power to identify what is reality for them in the Christian world has remained obscure--holiness and sinfulness have been defined by men for women for thousands of years. Because woman's experience and historical contribution have been buried under layers of traditional interpretations, listening to themselves with imagination is essential for growth.

The imagination knows the language of mystery and the sacred; revelation comes first at this level. Moreover, symbols and images operate preverbally and prerationally. They provide access to levels of experience deeper than, but not yet able to be formulated in, clear concepts. The new spirituality of women will first appear in these forms, and that is why the language of the imagination--image, symbol, story, dream and ritual--is so important for spiritual guidance with women.⁸

With this new vision of Christian growth for women comes much-needed affirmation of woman's sacredness, to heal past devaluation of the female experience. Kathleen Fischer adds that a focus on interdependence is necessary to resolve the split between the self and "other" in Christianity. Women do this by establishing inclusivity in language and thought,

while working to eliminate all interlocking forms of oppression.⁹

Traditional ideals of spiritual perfection reflect these stereotypical qualities, frequently resulting in portrayals of women saints as sentimental and submissive or urging women to imitate manly virtues as soldiers of Christ who are engaged in the spiritual struggles of Christian warfare. Feminist spirituality seeks to heal such dualisms and replace them with a vision of human wholeness for both women and men. In this way the faces and voices denied expression can come to life.¹⁰

Fresh images of holiness in terms of courage and strength are helpful to women; for instance, finding liberating stories of women in the Bible, such as in Mary of Nazareth's response to God's call to give birth to a Saviour and establish a whole new world (Luke 1), or Jesus' calling the woman at the well to spread the good news (John 4), can be positive affirmations of women's sacredness.

New approaches to seeing the body as not competitive with the spirit, but as a part of a greater living whole, are also necessary. Dualistic approaches separating body/spirit and good/evil are replaced with holistic thinking, making the spirit and body part of each other, and redemption possible for the whole person. Celebration of the body and the spirit are much needed for women in today's world of violence.

Further, the new vision for women takes the dichotomy of being relational versus being individualistic and makes the two ways of living compatible. Self-esteem and independence can be experienced together through caring about and for others. This holistic view of functioning in the world is

the message of the gospel. Dorothee Soelle describes sharing in relationship this way:

. . .this net of giving and taking is part of our daily experience. Every time we learn to give without calculating what we will get in return and every time we learn to receive without feeling ashamed or indebted, we tie a few more knots into this large net and make it a little more secure. If I cease to give and take, I become a stone. If I blossom as a tree blossoms, I am in an equilibrium of giving and taking. This is why the sentence "it is more blessed to give than to receive" is, in a profound sense, untrue and misleading. Perhaps we should say instead: It is more blessed to give and receive than to have and to hold. If my hands are fully occupied in holding on to something, I can neither give or receive.¹¹

An inclusive thought-process and spirituality breaks down the "us and them" mentality of patriarchy. Exclusivity defines people as "other," stereotypes people of colour, all women, poor, gay and lesbian persons, and keeps them from participating and gaining any kind of healthy power. This approach to life is what keeps racism, sexism and all division alive. Eliminating oppression starts with a new and inclusive perception of life, leading to growth and health. With the new outlook comes the desire to address inequality in the world as well as gaining healing for oneself.

Description through spoken and unspoken language and experience of God takes place in a liberating way when women are able to listen to themselves, and each other. Through listening, affirmation of women's power in God and relationship with each other relating occurs; this "power" is not thought of as being a possession one has, but a strength one uses, individually and together. Power becomes

empowerment. A potential for building self-esteem soon follows. When specific issues such as violence against women, feelings of guilt, how to handle anger, or finding space for oneself surface, listening to and affirming women as people with legitimate feelings is the first step toward wholeness. Once women feel listened to, they find that articulation of their joys and pains becomes easier, and their relationship with God becomes more imaginative and creative.

An important part of the group process is to acknowledge the presence of God within the group's work. A relational approach to koinonia must include not only connection between women and men, but a connection with God as well. For Christians, this relationship with God can be experienced and expressed through worship.

In Christian women's groups, women wish to relate to each other, but also want to find a way to relate to God more closely than they have in the past. Questions of God's presence and how this is manifested in the relationships, church and world arise, as well as the questions about male domination and patriarchal liturgies that women find in the wider church's worship. Faith issues are an important part of women's make-up.

The proliferation of modern works on women's spirituality . . . as well as the renewed interest in classical works such as those of Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, and Therese of Lisieux, attests to women's desire to engage in deeper interplay of spiritual receptivity and activity, in a specific focus on the interior person. . . when these faith issues are addressed by female and/or feminist theologians, the theme of continuity in both classical and modern texts has been women's need for autonomy and self-

direction, as well as mutuality and relationship.¹²

Acknowledging and engaging in communication with God in Christian feminist women's groups involves looking at traditional images and words. Tradition has defined God primarily in terms of patriarchal authority - Father, Judge, Almighty, King. Christ has become Lord, Brother, King, Judge, Head, Husband. For women, the connotations of many of these words can be negative, reinforcing the power of the male dominance over them through their relationships with God. These images can be balanced with other images of God found in the bible - Mother, Rock, Eagle, Lover, Friend, etc. Women need to be free to choose the images and language that are best for them. They also need to have the opportunity to worship in new ways, through body movement, singing feminist hymns, meditation based on healing women's pain, and liturgies and rituals¹³ that they create themselves. This approach to worship within the group context opens new possibilities for relationship with God and expands the understanding of God for women. An inclusive and emancipatory approach brings about a revised theology for women and the whole church. This theology invites people to share the good news of freedom and empowerment in Christ.

Facilitating Group Work

The role of the facilitator is important in the group's work. Before a group begins, the facilitator needs to make clear to members that there are several responsibilities she has

within the group dynamic. Group work must be tempered by caution on the part of the writer/researcher. The process, as Butler and Wintram rightly point out, may be subject to abuse, by exposure of personal life-issues without appropriate response. They outline three understandings of group dynamics for leaders that have been kept in mind for this particular setting.

First, the facilitator, whatever the role she or he takes on, must not lose sight of the fact that the group consists of women working together.

This provides the opportunity for enrichment and challenges, where disagreements and our own oppressive behaviour can be examined honestly and critically.¹⁴

Second, the researcher-to-woman relationships cannot claim to be objective, contrary to many masculinist researchers who would claim their own neutrality. This research deliberately uses a holistic approach which incorporates an analysis of the dynamic interaction between the researcher and the other group members. Direct involvement means that I, as facilitator, am OF and IN the group simultaneously. Interpretation and theoretical constructs are shaped by my experience of being part of the group. Avoiding the risk of exploitation will involve using written summaries and feedback from group meetings, women's personal statements during the time together, and an ongoing written evaluation process. Also, the women will have a chance to evaluate what they see written here with regards to my report about how each meeting progressed. They will be asked to comment on

the accuracy of reporting.

Third, there is the minister-to-women relationship. As well as group facilitator, I am a minister within the wider Church of Scotland parish, to which all the women in the group belong. I carry church and state-sanctioned caring responsibilities toward all people within the parish, and at times, outwith it. So-called "woman-ministers," however, experience discrimination, through vertical and horizontal segregation based on hierarchical status. "Woman-ministers" also face a lack of support from colleagues who often refuse to address issues that female clergy uniquely encounter.

Female clergy predominantly are managed by the male church system; because all women are marginalised to some degree in the church, the minister lives with her own status in the organisation of the church, an awareness of the bias of theological and pastoral training, and a sense of oppressive situations in the church's patriarchal make-up.

Group work with women in the church involves various aspects of background information for any group facilitator. For effective group work, ideally a facilitator needs to combine several disciplines so that women's experience can be addressed at different levels. First, the facilitator must have a clear understanding of the influence patriarchy has had on Christian church history and theology. This understanding is crucial to help women see how their own thinking inadvertently has been shaped by assumptions made thousands of years ago. Consciousness-raising is the first step to help women come to terms with the stereotypes and

roles that have been forced upon them. The saintly suffering servant role is the most common one women face; this stereotype of women's calling in life has been justified biblically by the church. Unfortunately, women have played the role so well that they have lost much of their own self-worth and focus almost solely on others.¹⁵ If a facilitator understands this situation, she can help women see that they have not been able to form self-definition because they have accepted definition by the church.

A facilitator also needs a fundamental understanding of feminist psychology before undertaking group work. Often psychological tools are incorporated into pastoral care models used in the church. However, a problem for women arises with these models; twentieth-century psychology has for the most part focused on male behaviour and called this behaviour normative for all human beings.¹⁶ Psychology has reinforced the notion that the innate nature of women leads them to be primarily care-givers, wives and mothers, within a suffering servant context. Pastoral care-givers in the church may reinforce this view to women's detriment, because they are trained to see male models as normative. Modern patriarchal psychology reinforces the stereotypes of women that the church developed over the last few thousands years. Adopting patriarchal psychology and theology as norms in society and church provides a deadly combination for women who wish to break out of that patriarchal system. A facilitator needs to understand that this combination of the traditional disciplines does much to hold women in

subordinate roles.

A third element of group work that a facilitator needs to know about is how to invoke creative worship for and with women. Worship itself is an important part of Christian dialogue with God. New approaches to worship lead women to create their own ways of communicating with God and with each other. Their experiences are translated into liturgies and rituals that speak of women's own self-understanding in relation to God.

Finally, a facilitator must be willing to take on a care-giving role in terms of pastoral counselling herself. When women begin to share deeply in a group context, they often uncover unresolved issues and emotions and may find that they are overwhelmed when trying to talk to more than one person at a time. The facilitator may be a person women can turn to for one-to-one discussion outside the group work should the need arise. Women may also find that they do not trust every person in the group, so they wish to talk with one person in more depth about issues that trouble them.

Conclusion

These four areas of background knowledge will aid the facilitator in her enabling role in a group. Group work together with women in similar situations with a conscious acknowledgement of the presence of God is the first step to bringing about alternative thinking in the way the church functions. First, however, the group must create its own identity and begin to struggle with the issues relevant to

its members' lives.

In the next five chapters, I will address issues women face through a specific case study, where women share experience and thought in a group within the church. These chapters outline the topics that women shared in monthly meetings in seven and eight-week increments, followed by composing acts of worship together. The women also periodically describe how group work together affects their lives.

5. Butler, Sandra and Claire A. Lewis. *Gendered Subjects*. London: SAGE Publications, 1991. p. 4.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

7. The definition of "politicized" use here is "unity that produces or is based on common interests and beliefs."

8. Fischer, Kathleen. *Women at the Well*. Boston: Paulist Press, 1988. p. 10.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

11. Soelle, Dorothea. *The Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Spirituality*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984. p. 33.

12. Glaz, Maxine and James W. Moen. *Women in Travail and Transition: A New National Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991. p. 83.

13. Definitions of "liturgy" and "ritual" can be found in Appendix One.

14. Butler and Wintrow, p. 21.

15. See Collins, Sheila, *A Different Heaven and Earth*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971. p. 23.

16. Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice*. Harvard University Press, 1982. p. 4.

ENDNOTES

1. Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psycholanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. p. 150.
2. See 1 Corinthians 12. 1-11.
3. For example, see Paul in Ephesians 2. 11-22, where he describes the nature of the racially reconciled church in Ephesus, commending the ending of hostility and division and promoting peace.
4. The definition of "feminism" for the work in this research can be found in Appendix One.
5. Butler, Sandra and Claire Wintram. Feminist Groupwork. London: SAGE Publications, 1991. p. 6.
6. Ibid., p. 84.
7. The definition of "solidarity" I use here is "unity that produces or is based on common interests and beliefs."
8. Fischer, Kathleen. Women at the Well. Boston: Paulist Press, 1988. p. 10.
9. Ibid., p. 31.
10. Ibid., p. 32.
11. Soelle, Dorothee. The Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984. p. 33.
12. Glaz, Maxine and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner. Women in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991. p. 212.
13. Definitions of "liturgy" and "ritual" can be found in Appendix One.
14. Butler and Wintram, p. 21.
15. See Collins, Sheila, A Different Heaven and Earth. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1977. p. 88.
16. Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice. Harvard University Press, 1982. p. 6.

PART II: A Practical Study in Building Koinonia

CHAPTER SIX: A CASE STUDY - GROUP WORK WITH WOMEN

Introduction

The fundamental basis for forming a woman's group within the parish church context was to explore and hopefully overcome some of the obstacles women encounter psychologically and spiritually in their lives, and to empower women to share their experiences with men. I would call the particular group working together here a small community brought together for the purpose of discovering self to a greater degree, and developing relationships that are intentionally supportive and liberating. This group is part of the journey toward a larger community, koinonia, where other groups join together in dialogue and bring about a whole and empowered church.

The Target Group

The target group chosen in this study consists of white, middle-class, western Protestant women for several reasons. First, it is my own context out of which I write; therefore, I am reflecting the level at which I have participated in the feminist movement within the church as a lay person, and more recently, as an ordained minister. Second, the majority of scholarship to date addresses this group, though the imbalance is being redressed quickly. This scholarship often neglects the connection between feminist psychology, pastoral

need, and worship. Third, the scope of issues for women is very different when one looks at the broad range of cultures, races and economic situations in the world. To try and deal with more than one background at a time is an injustice to everyone in this case, for no one would be fairly represented in the space available here.

For a sense of trust, intimacy and self-revelation, size of the group must be limited. In this case, we have seven. The exercise to choose the group is a value-laden exercise. Questions of racism, ageism, "marital status" and exclusion of a male minister all arose in the early stages of planning. The group is fairly homogeneous - seven females, white Caucasian, working full or part time, ages ranging from 27 - 47 at the time of the first meeting, 6 married with two or more children at home, one single without children, 7 have some form of higher education, 7 considered to be economically "middle class," 2 were encountering economic changes during the duration of the group's meeting, 7 church attenders (the facilitator for this group, included in the 7, is a full-time minister within the parish). Professions: computer analyst, medical doctor, play group leader (which subsequently changed to medical insurance broker), administrative secretary, financial and administrative secretary (in the process of re-training for nursing), college lecturer and minister.

This group does not represent a cross-section of the church, but is representative of the majority of women's experience at some point within the church's life presently.

(Further groupwork needs to be conducted with women who are widowed, single, divorced, young women and elderly women, to name a few.) I have chosen to work with this type of group make-up because, in the early stages of group work within the church, I saw the importance of finding mutuality in a circumstance to address the situations of frustration and sometimes isolation that women were feeling in their lives. Several circumstances in the case of the six women attending the group involved a separation from potential friends and a sense of "going it alone." Others did not feel that they had a support network that would help with various experiences they have had.

The Approach to Group Work in this Research

In this research, I apply the philosophy and principles of feminism, with respect to the issues that arise within the group. To begin, there is an examination of feminist principles based on the experiences and nature of the group and its members' lives. Following that, I will look at group process and identify movement within the group. Finally, I will look at the process of feminist Christian discovery within the group context developed here. Integrated throughout is the belief that women have the right to seek power and control over their own lives, and to feel secure in challenging conventional images of themselves. The group provides scope for personal and political re-evaluation, with change emerging out of collective and individual action.¹

Approaching group work in terms of feminist psychology,

theology and worship does not follow a technique. The approach reflects a way of being and a way of understanding - introducing a perspective instead of a formula. This relational perspective of group work for women encourages self-exploration, acknowledges need for interconnectedness and friendship and allows for change and fluidity. The feminist approach attempts to avoid psychological, theological and liturgical jargon and dogma. It is concerned with women's participation in the process of growth instead of establishing a mysterious, hierarchical relationship between counsellor/group leader/ minister and counsellor/group participant/lay person.

Facilitators in group work geared toward caring for women need to give up hierarchically based power and promote mutuality as well as encourage empowerment for the group and the individuals. The feminist approach also actively incorporates an understanding of the political and social background from which women come; it moves beyond non-sexist thinking into a liberating focus for women.

Encouraging women to trust themselves, to become more assertive and to be able to acknowledge and express anger are other central themes in feminist work. Women's experience is heard; it is not invalidated or repressed. It is seen as an essential part of their being. It is recognised that their experience comes from an interaction of the internal and the external, but the first step in untangling this is allowing and encouraging the expression of that experience. Understanding cannot take place without providing an

atmosphere conducive to trust, the freedom to say anything, and the belief that what is said will be accepted.²

The power of the group can be realised through each woman's discovery of her true self at the same time as she discovers her positive role in relationships. As Miller believed, women found that increasing others' understanding and capability simultaneously increased a woman's own power and empowerment.³ The women also recognised that they manage multiple roles with conflicting demands, calling for a balancing act in which group members weigh personal concerns against external expectations and motivations. They juggle responsibilities in keeping the relationship-system running smoothly in the family and at the workplace. This way, the women fulfil their sense of duty and they hope, find a measure of stability and security.⁴ The tension between connection in and separation from personal relationships often goes unrecognised by women; women effectively conceal their own aspirations from themselves as a result of "needing to be there for others." Yet this paradox of connection and individuation leads to exploration of Self in women's groups. As women begin to understand the tension, they also see that they can make priorities and decisions in their lives about how they wish to operate within relationships and how much attention they can give to themselves. A Self with her own clear characteristics and wishes develops, and then shares in the communication and relating process with others, leading to further growth.

Women's groups can foster this self-development by

reassessing the value of caring. An aspect of identity which is negatively perceived can become a source of satisfaction when viewed comparatively. The centrality of relational ties in women's lives means that woman can find knowledge of herself through the impact of group relations on her. The teachings of women's groups lead, therefore, to the development of the Caring Self within an atmosphere of mutuality. Hence, women end up perceiving each other as allies rather than rivals.⁵

Women can adapt to varied roles at the same time that they can transcend social expectations to a degree. If the sense of conforming to what is required from external sources changes to an affirmation of creative coping capabilities, women begin to see themselves as intelligent, competent and increasingly self-reliant and successful by their own definitions. Thus, self-esteem increases as action through relationship is affirmed.

Personal development for women involves naming what is important to them and giving themselves their own description. This self-understanding recognises the fluid nature of identity change. Redefining oneself is a long and painful process which involves detaching from expectations while at the same time retaining relationship. In some cases, relationships with people who constantly undermine the self-esteem of women may need to be broken. This process itself requires sufficient self-esteem in a woman to know that she is making the right decision for her in opposition to most religious and societal opinions, and it also requires

support from other women.

It takes time to build confidence in a group setting; women are encouraged to share as deeply as they wish and are not asked to do what is uncomfortable for them. Consequently, if group members show that they are trustworthy over a series of meetings, and that they will not "judge" or break confidences, the group begins to share significant, often painful events in their lives. This trust continues to break down isolation while at the same time building self-confidence; women can begin to say, "I am worthy of having people listen to me and take me seriously for my own sake."

Expressing emotion can be threatening for women when many of their experiences have given them the message that showing emotion is "weak" and conveys insecurity and helplessness, or a desire on the woman's part to be manipulative. Some women may have learned these behaviours as the only means to get power or even control over their own lives in some way, though, when challenged, most women do not want to function in this manner. Several women in the case study of "Time Out" have stated that they fear expressing intense emotion. They don't know what the response will be from the other members. "Crying is so WEAK," said one woman once. If the members can learn that sharing intense emotion is acceptable, although uncomfortable, they may begin to feel that they have permission to cry and be angry about personal experiences without the bonds and friendships of the group disintegrating.

This whole new sharing dynamic may be foreign to women;

Listening to a woman wholeheartedly and accepting her exactly as she is at that moment is the antithesis of women's experiences outside the group, where attention is taken up with diverging demands. The luxury of concentrating on one thing at a time is denied.⁶

Internalising positive information about oneself is often the most difficult task a woman can undertake. Often, she has had a lifetime of negative feedback from family, people in the workplace, and on a larger and pervasive scale, from the media, medical profession and academic institutions. However, the danger of positive feedback in a group is that it may lead to "cosiness," a sense of having support without challenge and therefore seeing no need to change at all.

The patterns of interaction within groups vary from meeting to meeting; however, members of the group need to adopt a system of speaking turns, so that each woman has a chance to express what she wants. Likewise, a woman is free to remain silent if she does not wish to share. By taking "turns" to speak, the group members adopt a co-operative way of communicating which differs significantly from the competition to speak which most experience in the "outside world." Furthermore, women are given the space and time they need to share, which helps to underline the value of their experience and expression. Again, there is a struggle within the group structure to learn that each woman's contribution is valuable.

The hope of gaining self-esteem and moving toward wholeness finds support and even a foundation in women's friendships.

Friendships contribute to personal growth, support of change, and are positively associated with women's psychological well-being.⁷ Women's groups themselves lead to the link between self-disclosure, validation of women as worthy human beings, positive reinforcement of women's friendships, and a sense of being isolated no longer. Women recognise their own power and also increase their awareness of the patriarchal understandings in the church and world that have created the isolation of women from each other and their invisibility in general. The effect is that women can become rootless; barriers to friendship may seem so insurmountable that lasting intimacy becomes all but impossible for them.

When this problem is combined with the focus on women needing to relate primarily to men, a world-view has been established that erases the historical and cultural diversity of women's interactions with each other. Patriarchy exerts pressure on women to exist only for men. Activity during the day is timed around the arrival of a man. At work, women constitute the majority of support staff and thus wait for instruction from the boss, who, in most business or church situations is male. If a woman does not work outside the home, she often organises her day around her husband's or partner's schedule. Indeed, women may begin to recognise that the only bond that receives complete social, political, economic and religious sanction is woman's relationship to men. Women have believed this world-view and often find that the struggle is too great to re-adjust if there is opposition to their putting relationships with men aside at times to

focus on friendships with women. The group contributing to this case study, Time Out, has recognised that men turn to women for emotional support, and that many women see their main roles in life to provide the support when it is asked of them. That way, women feel wanted and fulfil their need to give; what is more subtle is the hope that women feel that men might offer them something in return for this support, such as loyalty, returned support, gratitude, love. Some women experience this mutuality with men; many do not, but are pleasantly surprised that they can find it in friendship with other women.

With this understanding of the benefits of group work as a caring context for women, I will show the rationale behind the group work that the women in "Time Out" encountered during their meetings together. Therapeutic and spiritual aims for the group were met through a series of exercises and homework, often enhanced and changed slightly by the facilitator as the meeting took place. The nature of the homework varied from meeting to meeting, depending on what issues were raised and what issues women wished to explore, in addition to the facilitator's sense that some issues were being overlooked or dealt with defensively. The women themselves were quick to see what themes for discussion were essential for their own growth and development of relationships within the group. Guilt, anger, need to be needed, weakness, control issues, insecurity, selfishness and self-esteem, body image and health issues, and loneliness emerged as topics for discussion from the group itself,

within the first few meetings.

In this case, the impetus for group work was of my own making; I hoped to respond to a group of women within the church with whom I'd had contact in varying degrees who seemed to be searching for some different kind of meaning in their lives. My own experience of gaining strength and consciousness-raising in groups led me to bring together a group which consequently named itself "Time Out." All group members were aware when they were invited that this group was both for all our benefits and for a research project. Several areas emerged as factors influencing the facilitating of the group:

1. an awareness of a gap in support of working women by women within the context of the predominantly white-middle-class parish church in Scotland.
2. repeated statements from women throughout the church about how they experience ambiguity in their various life-roles and sense of self.
3. an awareness that there is no "safe" and local forum available in the Christian community for women to explore what is important to them.
4. a hope that as woman's issues are articulated and needs practically addressed, that the church itself will experience growth in awareness of these issues and needs, followed by more appropriate expression of inclusivity and mutual-empowerment within the worshipping community and other contexts.

Establishing and Preparation for the Group Meetings

I had contact with the potential members in June 1990, before the women committed themselves to taking part in the group; expectations and responsibilities were clarified, and enough information was given for the women to decide for themselves whether the group would be useful to them or not. Each woman agreed to participate, and the group as a whole decided to keep its doors closed for its work, with the caveat that another, open group might be formed in the church, along the same lines, which they and others could attend (this second group already has been developed along the same lines, but has open attendance).

"Time-Out," the name the group chose to call itself, has been meeting since June 1990, and continued to meet with the same membership until May 1992. The group met in a comfortable room at the church, where there was a pleasant atmosphere and refreshment facilities. This space was closed off from the rest of the church, and the women appreciated a place where they felt safe and could express their emotions in discussion and also in worship when they felt so moved. Because of time-demands in the women's daily lives, the group met once each month on average. We shared social outings periodically as well, to remember how important it was to play together.

Seven factors are involved in the therapeutic, educative, and spiritual aims for the group:

1. to break down the walls of a form of isolation that has

prohibited women from sharing their experiences at any deep level and facilitate friendships among women.

2. to build self-confidence and self-esteem by offering women structures and ideas that they may work with to develop their own potential.

3. to increase self-awareness and help women to understand and appreciate their bodies, their space, their inner selves, and their integrity.

4. to build awareness of issues that affect their lives on a socio-political level, and make links between these issues and private concerns/difficulties they might have.

5. to support women through any transition period from one stage of a relationship to the next.

6. to encourage women to reach and stay with whatever decision that felt best and was most realistic for them in the circumstances.

7. to enable the collective spirit of the group to recognise its own power and solutions to problems which they can control.⁸

Definitions of the group are given by the group itself, based on a survey conducted in October 1991.⁹ Definitions of this kind of group work drawn up by practitioners, psychologists, or ministers do not allow the flexibility, self-understanding and potential for re-definition as the group matures. Self-definition is an important process for women in group work. Below is a summary of the women's understanding of themselves.

Time-Out is:

1. a source of deep friendship.
2. a source of support, where the knowledge that regular meetings take place and that the same people will be present represents a reassuring "safe place" to come.
3. a place to recognise shared experiences, feelings and their value.
4. a way of breaking down emotional loneliness and isolation.
5. a place to experience power over personal situations with the capacity to change them.
6. a place to learn new skills, such as listening effectively and acknowledging that difference isn't necessarily divisive.
7. a place to discover group identity and individual identity.
8. a place of non-judgmental acceptance, where trust is built.
9. a place to re-evaluate personal outlook on one's self and one's world.
10. an opportunity to worship together and to build the group in connection with God.
11. a place to explore one's personal relationship with God.

The homework exercises all related in some way to the topics listed, while requiring women to spend time between meetings thinking about the issue at hand. A list of the homework exercises shows the arrangement and movement of the group work through months of meeting:

For September 1990: The women were to bring in objects that were of importance to them. They also were asked to find some space to themselves over the month of August, to reflect about who they are and what they would like to be.

The objects which women brought in were to show who and what was important to them in their lives. It also provided a way of women sharing stories about their backgrounds, and reflecting on memories or situations that made/make a great impact in their lives.

Deliberately taking space and time for themselves was an exercise to show women that they are worthy people, who have needs of their own which must be met for their own wholeness and health. Their claims on time are as important as their spouses' or children's claims.

For October 1990: The women were asked to deal with blatantly sexist situations which they found in Posy Simmons' cartoons. They also were to bring in books that were significant to them, to have available as a small library.

This homework began to deal with women's situations in work and at home, and introduced the concept of sexism. The group then was asked to focus on sexist situations that exist in their lives, and what they notice in the world around them that affects women negatively.

Reacting to and sharing books widens women's reading world, as well as providing incentive to read more. Most of the books shared were written from a feminist viewpoint, and there was space made for discussion and book review during sharing time at the beginning of each meeting. Stories also

sometimes help women to articulate their own situations and let them know that they are not alone, or even in an isolated group situation.

For November 1990: Over the month of October, the women were asked to draw their ideal bodies, or bring a picture or photograph that showed the others what they wanted to look like.

The idea behind this homework was to take the topic of sexism one step further, and combine it with the self-esteem issues that had already arisen in the group. The homework for October introduced the topic of sexism, and this month the women were asked to relate sexism to their own self-images, on a physical level, and also their personal worship expectations - both on a physical and emotional level.

For December 1990: Celia Kitzinger's article, "Why men hate women,"¹⁰ was handed out and the women were asked to react to it. Also, because friendships were becoming all-important in the group, and worship was taking on significance to all members, I asked them to think about communion and its meaning for them.

Here, there was an attempt to look at why sexism exists from a psychological point of view. The article summarised a number of issues stemming from church fathers as well as other social issues that the group had discussed generally. This homework was an attempt to help women focus on what they perceived to be the root of the problem, and if there were any place for change in their own lives and on a wider social and ecclesiastical scale.

Sharing thoughts on communion was the second task for the group; communion as a sacrament shared by community ideally would bring people together on an even closer level. As Time Out began to celebrate its own unity, communion took on a deeper meaning in group context. The attempt here to discuss this sense of solidarity in a liturgical setting deliberately introduced acknowledgement of the presence of God into the group setting.

For January 1991: The group was asked to create a worship service for later in the month.

To incorporate the new insight to women's situation in the world and church as well as connect women's lives to the presence of God, I asked the group to write its own worship service without me. This task involved focusing on the significance of the group to women, and also reflection on where they have journeyed since Time Out began to meet. These thoughts and feelings could be pulled together in a liturgical act, acknowledging the spiritual element of women's journeys. Thus, by this time, fundamental elements of the personal, political and spiritual had been introduced into the group work.

At a later meeting in January, the group was asked to lead the facilitator through worship, and then reflect on the experience of creating, and then worshipping together. The impact of this work was to be discussed and incorporated into future work together, so that women deliberately worked with their own and communal spirituality alongside psychological and social issues.

For February 1991: The group was asked to look at "Qualities" from Ruth Gendler's book.¹¹

These "qualities" were personality traits that women had described in previous meetings, either as topics of discussion or simply in passing. The idea was to focus more clearly on self-analysis and take the introspective process further than self-image. The women were asked to spend time reacting in writing to the words they were given, which meant that they took some space for themselves and also thought deeply about their lives and their reactions to themselves.

For March 1991: All the women were asked to write 3 reasons why they liked each woman in the group, as well as 3 reasons why they liked themselves. They were to give the other women pieces of paper with their comments on them.

Based on the previous month's homework, it became clear that self-esteem was very low in each woman, though in different areas. The work for this month involved trying to address women's need to bolster others' confidence and self-esteem while so often ignoring their own. By the end of the meeting, each woman would have in her possession at least 21 reasons others liked her. This exercise actively engages women in their emotional response to praise, and the feelings they encounter when trying to give themselves credit for who they are. Its purpose is to address feelings, instead of the intellectual understanding that most women have low self-esteem. This exercise also involves an element of surprise, because often feelings about oneself are more painful than women realise.

For April 1991: The women were asked to acknowledge International Women's Day by bringing in items that represented symbols of womanhood all over the world. They also were asked to use creativity by putting together a collage of pictures of what was important to them in their lives - the most important radiating from the middle of a circle, the least important on the periphery. They also had been asked to continue their personal journeys by adding one item to their own "I like myself because" lists.

Having established a foundation for personal work and introspective thinking and feeling, I asked the group to move back into the realm of solidarity with all women. They had been gaining a deepening understanding of the difficulties they encountered in their lives, and yet needed to acknowledge that their own lives were very different from the majority of the world's women. The question became then, can women of such differing backgrounds have something in common? Can there be solidarity amongst women in the world?

Making the collage asked women to set priorities in their lives and find where they themselves took priority. Because issues of self-esteem and finding space continued to be a problem for the group, I decided to focus on these themes for a few months. The "I like myself" cards were part of the ongoing, though slow, process of learning to find self-worth internally.

For May 1991: Group members were asked to write their own funerals, answering the question - "how do I want to be remembered?"

Several issues arise when composing one's own funeral. Each woman would need to face death as something she would encounter in the future. It also asked of women that they articulate their personal relationships with God. Finally, the exercises showed them how they wished to be remembered; what would be the "ideal self" for each woman? The exercise asks women to encounter who she is and who she wants to be, in the context of every-day living and also her spiritual needs.

For June 1991: This month dates the one-year anniversary of Time Out's meeting together. I asked them to follow through from their homework last month by writing down how their relationships with God had changed, and how they had grown in the past year.

Anniversaries are stock-taking times. The growth of the group as well as the individuals within it had been significant, and I was interested in the women's perceptions of their journey. It is valuable to see one's own movement over time and also the development of the group; these elements add another layer for the foundation of self-esteem that the women were working on building.

This homework also provided assessment of the group work from a therapeutic and theological point of view. Feedback and suggestions for the future helped me to understand the nature of the journey together and to get an idea of the path ahead.

For August 1991: I asked the group to be responsible for bringing up a topic that they wished to discuss. One member

offered an article about the female condom.

As facilitator, I began to hand over leadership to members of the group, so that they were taking responsibility for themselves at the same time as working on taking responsibility for their lives outwith group meetings. This approach also helped me gauge if the group wanted to continue with deeply intensive work at this time or whether they wished to "rest," and focus on more detached issues. Sexism and sexuality became the subject for discussion in August.

I decided at this point that the women would know better what issues were most important to them, and asked that pairs of women would lead the next few months of meetings for the rest of us.

For September 1991: Two women led a meeting about distinguishing the difference between self-esteem and selfishness.

For October 1991: I asked the women to put together another worship service for November; I would not be able to be present in October, and I also wanted to see how worship changed over a nine-month period.

For November 1991: The group worshipped together and discussed the process of creating the liturgy again. I noticed a change in approach and a different understanding of God's presence.

For December 1991: Two women led a meeting about sexuality and educating daughters to have the self-esteem to make responsible decisions in this realm.

For January 1992: Two women led a meeting about compromise

in life and outlook when life hasn't treated them the way they wished it had. They also focused on God's presence in their lives and the significance of prayer.

For February 1992: Group members were asked to resume to writing thoughts down for the meeting - this time on issues of fear, anger and depression.

Through the meetings which the women had led and in light of all the discussions that had taken place through the months, I sensed a deep-seated fear of change (though some women worked through the fear), as well as significant depression leading to a feeling of being "stuck." I also heard a great deal of suppressed anger, and hoped to address how women dealt with conflict, both in their families and friendships as well as in the group.

Fear, anger and depression had never been topics of discussion for the group per se, but had surfaced in such a way that they became the underlying factors for low self-esteem. The homework asked women to take a deep look at their fears, their anger and the depression they might feel, and begin to grapple with how these feelings could all be related. The group had articulated its need to keep working introspectively in the past few months, but seemed to have some trouble doing this kind of self-analysis without some guidance.

For March 1992: Members were to think about the future of the group after the facilitator moved away (May 1992). They also were asked to think about what kind of worship service they might write before I left, and what issues they needed

to address over the next few months before the group membership changed or the group decided to stop meeting in its present form. They also were given an exercise where they were to each read about a biblical female and react to her situation in their own words.

The idea was to begin to bring together the feminist issues that group had discussed over the period of almost two years with biblical and theological issues. The group did not distinguish between the "theological" and "psychological" in most of the meetings, though they were conscious of faith issues and life-issues being tied strongly together.

After the March meeting, two more meetings were to be held to set out the future of the group without the facilitator, and to plan a closing worship service that all seven members could share together. Then the group was to take responsibility for its own work or social life if it wished to continue along the same lines.

The rationale behind the series of homework "assignments" was to lead women through various stages of awareness in terms of their own life-situations, the social awareness that affected their lifestyles and personal opinions of self, the make-up of their emotional and spiritual lives, and the general path to a greater sense of self-esteem and the presence of God in daily life.

Conclusion

Within this approach to the group work, there was room for the group guiding the facilitator through an interplay of

ideas and foci for which the group members were responsible. As meetings progressed, I did not always follow a pre-determined plan that I had thought through before the meeting, and I did not set a goal which resulted in my steering the group toward an "inevitable" outcome. Women were called to take responsibility for their own discussion and mental/emotional work each month.

7. Seven
to ten
In chapters eight to eleven, I will proceed to discuss the issues raised in each meeting of Time Out. Chapter eight introduces the first two meetings of the group and the initial exercises they undertook to get to know each other and describe issues that they found important. These issues form the basis for the work that Time Out consequently did in the following twenty months. Chapter nine explores issues in the first five months of meeting together. This time was spent dealing with the issues the women had raised in the first two meetings, and exploring new ways to focus on themselves. The series of meetings culminated in a worship service in January 1991, which the women created together.

Chapter ten moves into issues that arose for the women on a deeper level than in previous months. Shared emotional work grew increasingly as a significant part of the group dynamic. Theological issues were addressed increasingly directly, and women began to take responsibility for facilitating the meetings themselves. This series of meetings culminated again in worship that the women created together in October 1991, and further discussion about the emotional and mental movement of the group.

Chapter eleven describes the group work up to March 1992.

The group continues to meet with the current membership until May 1992, when the facilitator must leave. The group intends to have a final worship service together at that time.

The division of chapters is based on the major worship events which take place every seven or eight months in the group context. These worship experiences are significant points of time in the life of Time Out because they involved taking stock of where the group has been in terms of relationship-building and theological thought and where it wishes to move in the future.

8. Adapted from Butler and Wiatras, pp. 38-39.

9. See Appendix Two for survey giving definitions of Time Out.

10. Ritzinger, Celis. "Why Men Hate Women." *New Internationalist*, No. 212, October, 1990, p. 14.

11. Gendler, J. Ruth. *The Book of Qualities*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.

ENDNOTES

1. Butler, Sandra and Claire Wintram. Feminist Groupwork. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1991. p. 17.
2. Walker, Moira. Women in Therapy and Counselling. London: Open University Press, 1990. p. 75.
3. See Miller, Jean Baker, Toward a New Psychology of Women. (second edition), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986. pp. 40-41.
4. See Chapter Three for a description of women's role in marriage and family.
5. Butler and Wintram, p. 115.
6. Ibid., pp. 80-81.
7. See Davidson, S. and R. Packard, "The Therapeutic Value of Friendship Between Women," Psychology of Women Quarterly. Vol. 5, 1981. pp. 495-510.
8. Adapted from Butler and Wintram, pp. 38-39.
9. See Appendix Two for survey giving definitions of Time Out.
10. Kitzinger, Celia. "Why Men Hate Women." New Internationalist. No. 212, October, 1990. p.14.
11. Gendler, J. Ruth. The Book of Qualities. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS OF THE WOMEN'S GROUP

The first meeting of the women's group took place in June 1990. Six women had been invited to come together with the facilitator for the purpose of exploring issues that are important to them as Christian women.

When the group met together for the first time, I introduced my idea about coming together, learning about each other and what was important to women, and, if the group were open to it, worshipping together. I invited the women to have personal sharing time before each discussion took place on a monthly basis, so that we could catch up with the news or share something important to us. Each woman would have a chance to speak if she wished. I also explained that I was researching how to care for women in the church by understanding what is important to them, and asked if worship were an integral part of that care. Finally, I wondered what impact a group like this one might have on the make-up of the wider church.

The first interaction I asked of the group was for the women to share their reaction to my written invitation, and their feelings at the meeting itself. They indicated that they did not know what to expect exactly, but were pleased to be asked to help in the research project. No one had ever experienced this kind of group situation before. Several members of the group did not know each other, so each woman introduced herself.

I asked the women after the discussion about the purpose of

the group to think about what issues were most important to them. They mentioned the following topics:

child abuse

divorce about fear of cancer and breast removal, combined with

woman's space for herself

internal/external expectations of women contraception. Two

media images of women

motherhood discussion outside the group, described fears

men's interactions with women

women's guilt less and divorce; the questions they raised were

wife as servant

"Women's Lib" taking away responsibility from men will happen

pornography

rape as children?

abortion

self-esteem al meeting established the membership of the

women's bodies

cancer and began the process of the women getting to know each

singlehood

single mothers the newness of the group, several members

working women

women as carers (for long-term invalids) lives. All the women

seemed to welcome this kind of forum for discussion. The

The issue that arose in general discussion which the group seemed to focus on was the question: are women more attached to children emotionally/biologically than men? The women believed that they themselves are more attached because of the birthing process and because they are the primary care-takers. One woman thought that men would be attached as much as women if they were primary care-takers. She believed that the emotional bond was stronger than the physical.

Discussion about children dominated conversation, until I asked the group to share some information about themselves, followed by whether they found themselves personally involved in any of the issues or situations listed above. One member told the group that she had had a hysterectomy the previous summer as well as a miscarriage earlier in life. She

described the fear that came with pregnancy after that experience. Another brought up infertility issues and the resulting adoption of her children. General discussion ensued about fear of cancer and breast removal, combined with the women sharing mixed feelings about contraception. Two members in discussion outside the group, described fears about singleness and divorce; the questions they raised were - what will happen to me if I am alone, and what will happen to the children?

This initial meeting established the membership of the group and began the process of the women getting to know each other. Despite the newness of the group, several members shared some significant events in their lives. All the women seemed to welcome this kind of forum for discussion. The group focused on the topics of children and women's issues relating to the body. All members had two or more children with the exception of the facilitator, and each woman could find common ground on this topic. Issues relating to the body also is an issue that all women have in common, because they have the same anatomical make-up. Thus, the group found commonality almost immediately as the evening progressed. The women had begun to build relationship in the group situation at the first meeting.

I told the women that I would like to assign homework after each meeting, so that they had something to take with them to think about for the next meeting. I explained that the purpose of the homework was to introduce topics of thought for the women which they could spend time with on their own

undertakings she could take. They found that space was before coming together to share their ideas and reactions. simply impossible to find a space that they didn't have a This process kept focused thinking about the topics at hand right to ask for it. They were intentional once in awhile actively engaged between meetings. All the women agreed to about finding some time for themselves alone; however, they undertake homework projects on a regular basis.

Homework: the women were asked to choose the two topics their time to family or work. Two of these four admitted that were most important to them based on the list they had that having time to themselves made life much easier and created that evening.

The groups asked that there be no meetings during the month of July because the members all went on holiday at that time These two indicated that they were learning to respect their space as well. The groups were deliberate and took of year; so, the second meeting took place in August 1990. the space when it offered. They functioned in a The group began with a time for sharing events that had taken passive manner with respect to taking time for themselves. place in their lives since the group had last met. Most To explore in greater detail the value of space, I asked women told about their holiday experiences. Sharing time was each woman what she had done and had a day to herself. followed by looking at the choices of topics that the women Most would leave time for themselves and friends, the rest by themselves. If each woman had a week or more, two would meeting. The topics were ranked in order of choice, with travel to see distant relatives and two would spend most of each woman marking two topics on the list: the time in a deserted cabin. They would like to have time

away with space for women: 5

Worship: self-esteem: 2

difficult: guilt: 2

break off women's bodies: 2

together, divorce: 1

where they child abuse: 1

sanctuary men's interaction with women: 1

font. A candle was lit, and the room lighted.

Discussion about the first topic ensued. Each member felt that getting space for herself was one of the most difficult

undertakings she could tackle. Two found that space was simply impossible to find and implied that they didn't have a right to ask for it. Four were intentional once in awhile about finding some time for themselves alone; however, they often felt guilty when they did because they weren't giving their time to family or work. Two of these four admitted that having time to themselves made life much easier and their own presences were much more cheerful in the long run. These two indicated that the family was learning to respect their space as well. Others were less deliberate and took the space when it offered itself; they functioned in a passive manner with regard to finding time for themselves.

To explore in greater depth the value of space, I asked each woman what she would do if she had a day to herself. Most would leave the city, two with friends, the rest by themselves. If each woman had a week or more, two would travel to see distant relatives, and two would spend most of the time in a deserted cabin. Three would like to have time away with friends.

Worship: After discussing feelings of guilt and difficulties in giving oneself space, I asked the members to break off into pairs and write a prayer that we could share together, relating to our discussion. The women found places where they could work in pairs, then we moved into the sanctuary and I made a circle of chairs around the baptismal font. A candle was lit, and the room lighting dimmed. I read a passage from Ruether's Women-Church, and then asked the women to read their prayers while the rest of us

listened. After prayer and time of silence, we moved back to the meeting room.

Homework: I asked each woman to find time for herself over the next month, and during that time to write down anything that came to mind that was important to her. She was free to share the writing with me personally, or tear it up and throw it away, or share it with the group. I also asked them to bring in any object that was meaningful to them. The final assignment was to think of a name for the group.

The most significant issue raised in this meeting was women's feeling that they did not "deserve" time to themselves because they were "supposed" to be attending to other people's needs or accomplishing tasks. Taking time for themselves was linked with feeling guilty or selfish. The women understood themselves to be "servants" in a sense, though no one used that word directly. Several described their existence in terms of "being there for the children" and accomplishing the tasks required of them, but could not understand how taking time could benefit their own lives personally - this kind of thinking was quite foreign to most of the women. Two women, however, believed that they did have a right to space for themselves, and said that they did not function well without it. Again, however, they added that their families benefitted from their improved coping abilities as well.

The discussion showed that women think in terms of "giving" in their relationships; often they put needs of others before their own. Two women acknowledged that this kind of thinking

may not be helpful for their own fulfilment. Others did not believe that there was anything detrimental to this approach toward relationships.

The aim of the homework was to give women a purpose for finding space if they needed an excuse to do so. It also challenged the women to use the space to think about things that were important to them while they were alone. Asking the members of the group to take responsibility for naming themselves also asked them to begin thinking in terms of group identity.

Creating a worship time together was an initial step toward getting to know each other better in the context of Christian community. It also provided a new kind of space for the group. Writing prayers gave the women the initiative to lift their own concerns to God while taking some time to think about those concerns beforehand. The service together felt intimate though there was some tension because several women had never encountered this kind of experience before.

Worship added a new dimension to the evening. The women found that they could focus on a Being outside themselves as well as bring their own issues into perspective. The worship event seemed to have the power to bring some peace to the women's lives.

Synopsis

The introductory meetings showed that the women were excited about bonding in friendship. They also established quickly what were the most significant issues to them: motherhood and

their own lack of self-esteem. It became apparent that these topics were going to be discussed significantly throughout the months that the group would meet together.

The next few sessions began to develop the theme of self-awareness and self-esteem in terms of how women function in their lives since the last meeting. This sharing time was followed by the discussion of the homework from the previous week. Half-way through the discussion or when two topics were covered in one, the group was finished. The group stopped for a brief time. At that point, there was an exchange of books. Each member had a book that the group had established as its own and a book discussion usually took place. Then the previous (or new) topic would be continued, followed by an issuing of homework, then an act of worship (in most meetings). The group also shared a subscription to *Everywoman Magazine*,¹ a feminist magazine dealing with current political issues in Britain as well as creative writing and book reviews.

In the September 1990 meeting, the women shared whether or not they had found some time to write down any thoughts that were meaningful to them. All members found space except one. She shared her problem: she is full-time mother, house manager, full-time college lecturer, full-time typist for her husband who had just taken a "more responsible act no post" in teaching. She hopes that this year will not last long, but is afraid that it will last for two years at the minimum. She sees no alternative but to put it down.

Another member sent her thoughts through the group. She was not finding space like she wanted to do. She had to

CHAPTER EIGHT: EARLY ISSUES FOR THE WOMEN'S GROUP
herself. She arranged this situation with her boss and

The format of each meeting followed a similar course. The group began by sharing significant events that had occurred in their lives since the last meeting. This sharing time was followed by the discussion based on homework from the previous week. Half-way through discussion or when two topics were covered in one evening and one was finished, the group stopped for a coffee/tea break. At that point, there was an exchange of books from a shelf that the group established as its own and a book discussion usually took place. Then the previous (or new) topic would be continued, followed by an issuing of homework, then an act of worship (in most meetings). The group also shared a subscription to Everywoman Magazine,¹ a feminist magazine dealing with current political issues in Britain as well as creative writing and book reviews.

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* Another member sent her thoughts through the mail to me. She was not finding space like she wanted to, but had decided

family +
that she was going to put aside Mondays every week for
guilt +/-
herself. She arranged this situation with her boss and
insanity (inevitable) -
family, and is feeling good about her decision.

stress -
One woman felt it would be too selfish to demand space away
peace +
from her children. Another took space right before our
organising +/-
meeting, and surprised herself by writing down her thoughts -
work +/-
she felt selfish about focusing on herself instead of others.
*insecurity --
She wrote about the difficulty of articulating her thoughts
irritation -
and feelings, and also her guilt over an acquaintance's
bitterness -
recent suicide. One member took space deliberately, and
depression -
wrote in her journal about difficulties she was having at
freedom +
home. The sixth woman took the time to write, but felt
hope +
unable to share because she was feeling inadequate and
health +/-
unneded by her family; they had coped very well without her
quality-time ++
while she was away. She described her feelings as petulant.
*separation +/-
She is trying to define herself for herself.

*sorrow +/-
One woman observed from her writing that the following
reflection +
words all have "I" in them (marriage, family, guilt, faith,
space +
insignificance, insanity, insecurity--and then she added the
fun +
word "hostage" - Where do I fit in?). With her thought in
*weakness -
mind, I asked the group to list all the words that randomly
celebration +
came to mind at that very moment. I specified that they be
caring +
"feeling" words as much as possible. Then I asked them to
sharing +
describe whether these words were positive or negative(+/-).
sense of humour +
Some words triggered discussion and will be further marked
*control +/-
with an asterisk(*).

blessing +
*marriage +/-
squabbling - p +
happiness + on +

family +
 faith +
 guilt +/-
 insignificance -
 insanity (inevitable)-
 hostage -
 stress -
 silence +
 peace +
 sleep +
 organising +/-
 worrying -
 work +/-
 preparation +/-
 *insecurity --
 anger +/-
 irritation -
 pressure +/-
 bitterness -
 self-indulgence +/-
 depression -
 fear -
 freedom +
 perspective +
 hope +
 wow +
 health +/-
 cooperation +
 quality-time ++
 commitment +
 *separation +/-
 *tears +/-
 *sorrow +/-
 sadness -
 reflection +
 time +
 space +
 laughter +
 fun +
 pleasure +
 *weakness -
 love +
 celebration +
 party +
 caring +
 anxiety +/-
 sharing +
 manipulation -
 sense of humour +
 God +
 *control +/-
 gratitude +
 blessing +
 escape +
 companionship +
 communication +

trapped -
 relief +
 friendship +
 therapy +
 talk +
 open +
 mother +
 bossiness -
 failure +/-
 comfort +
 resolution +
 *acceptance +/-
 success +
 confidence +
 fulfilled +
 trust +
 partnership +
 gentleness +
 prayer +
 guidance +

This list showed me those emotions and situations that women found helpful in their lives and those about which they felt either ambivalent or negative. Words relating to or potentially relating to faith (God, blessing, prayer; faith, peace, gratitude, communication, sharing, trust), all had a positive impact on the women. The words that stimulated an ambivalent response followed by discussion (indicated by *), were primarily relationship issues or feelings arising in relationships that women had experienced in different ways. These words indicated underlying concerns with which individual women may have been dealing as well. I kept the list, with the intention of returning to it to see if women's reactions to words changed after the group had done some work with the words and emotions.

Anger seemed to promote the most ambiguity. Anger was equated with negative emotion which hurt people, and some indicated that her husband comments often called it inappropriate to express. Others thought that

overweight.)
anger, dealt with in a "proper" manner, could be positive, leading to the release of resentment and challenging the unacceptable situation openly. The group agreed to discuss anger in another meeting in the future.

I changed the topic to Self-confidence/self-esteem, picking up some of the points from the previous meeting. None of the women thought that they had adequate self-esteem. They were concerned about being defined by their work or defined as wives and mothers of other people. They could not remember any conversation (with the exception of one woman), where these roles were not mentioned in relation to their own self-description or others describing them. One woman had had a conversation one week previously where she never found out or told the other participants what her relationships were. One member observed that she was beginning to learn not to define herself totally by her work. So I asked the women whether they ever felt good about themselves as individuals, and how they might attain self-esteem. Everyone agreed that it came from other people recognising their worth. I pushed a bit about recognising our own worth, and they all said that that wouldn't happen unless it first came from outside. So, I asked what self-esteem would mean for each person. Each woman responded as follows (I have used only first initials to preserve anonymity):

F: The ability to assert myself - "I need space." Caring about myself. Have a better appearance, lose weight. (She indicated that her husband comments often on her being

overweight.)

A: Not always thinking about what other people think. Not confidence in the self comes from encouragement from others buying into "I am my work," like some people define me. My especially in the early stages of life. General life-work is my escape, fulfilment. I need to be needed though, experience and experience of success build confidence. and my family pitches in now that I work, and I have a harder setting realistic goals is stressful, as well as being time figuring out if they need me. I'd like to do things for flexible. I asked if anyone else group patted herself on myself without guilt. From the outside world, I'd like to be the back in the last week for nothing. There was a real seen as an individual, not as someone's wife or mother. struggle to come up with anything at all. One member said

R: Escape without guilt. My husband instils guilt, and often there is a lot of manipulation going on. I'd like to find a way to regain the self-confidence I once had.

Ja: To find a job that is not children's Playgroup--it is too easy and too routine. I have many decisions riding on my shoulders right now in my family, and am facing some difficult challenges--can't really talk right now. ideas, and the sixth member was wondering why women would

M: I'm insecure about my weight, but my husband doesn't seem to care at all, so I feel accepted. My values have changed in life, I've compromised on some things, and allowed my goals to change over time. I feel flexible, and that helps me feel good. walked past piles of housework to enjoy a few

Je: I find self-esteem through work. My boss pushed me off the cliff on a project, and I completed it successfully. I concept, then began to feel guilty for doing what they said was worth my own brain, not my being a wife or mother. I mentioned and started taking all the positive feedback for their actions away. When I pointed this out, they started to laugh at themselves a bit. Discussing went back to a-if saying "I can't."

esteem on a theoretical level. It was clear that the women
General discussion followed. The women mentioned that
confidence in the self comes from encouragement from others,
especially in the early stages of life. General life-
experience and experience of success build confidence.
Setting realistic goals is also helpful, as well as being
flexible. I asked if anyone in the group patted herself on
the back in the last week for anything. There was a real
struggle to come up with anything at all. One member said
that once in awhile when she did something major she would
give herself a stroke or two. I said, would it be possible
to do that once each day? Everyone instantly reacted
negatively. One woman found that suggestion self-indulgent,
another thought that it trivialised the big victories,
another couldn't find anything unless she balanced her books
accurately at work, still another thought it might be a good
idea, and the sixth member was wondering why women wouldn't
do that. Two women provided illustrations. One said she set
realistic goals for her day--she made a list of 4 or 5 things
to do, did them, and then did what she wanted or dealt with
whatever came up. The other said she did some sewing the
other day, and walked past piles of housework to enjoy a few
hours of her own time. I asked if they patted themselves on
the back for these things. They couldn't quite grasp the
concept, then began to feel guilty for doing what they had
mentioned and started taking all the positive connotations of
their actions away. When I pointed this out, they were able
to laugh at themselves a bit. Discussion went back to self-

esteem on a theoretical level. It was clear that the women felt more comfortable at this point when talking about self-esteem as a theoretical goal instead of their personal struggles with it.

After listening to several minutes of intellectual theory about self-esteem, I told the group that I was "stuck." I didn't know how we could find self-esteem without affirming ourselves, even on a daily basis. If we didn't find these stepping stones for ourselves, then all the external stroking in the world wasn't going to matter. Could we affirm ourselves on a daily basis?

No one answered the question directly. The contradiction about relying on others to help women to feel better about themselves while not wanting others to label them is important to point out for women. The members of the group were asked to think about the issue further, in terms of God loving them and their learning to love themselves.

The group decided to discuss a name for itself. Several suggestions included names that tried to capture the essence of women's friendship and sharing. However, the group decided that "Time Out" was the best name, because it signified the space and time that they were struggling to find in their own lives and also that it implied taking deliberate "time out" from daily activities to be together.

Worship: The lights were dimmed and a candle was lit in the room. The women shared the objects which they had been asked to bring for the meeting. Members described the origins of the following objects and what they meant to them:

Ja: She shared an old, old scrap book that she inherited from her grandmother, and a charm bracelet that she shares with her brother; he sends her a charm every time something significant happens in his life. This connection with her brother was very important to her, and she wished that she could see him more often. He lives abroad.

M: She brought to the group an old velvet ribbon (pink) that her mother wore on her wedding hat, and asked her to keep. The ribbon reminded her of her mother and of her own wedding.

A: She showed the group her mother's watch, but didn't feel able to talk much about her mother at the time. She also told the group about the pen that her children gave her when she went back to work as the church secretary.

R: She shared a cross that she received at confirmation, then lost outdoors once, and "miraculously" found again. This cross brought back pleasant memories and reminded her of her relationship with God.

Je: She showed the group a card that a minister wrote when she had her appendix out long ago. She thought she had lost the card, then found it again just before she had her hysterectomy. She thought the timing was strange for the card to "re-surface" and it gave her hope in midst of the fear of the upcoming operation.

F: She shared a vase that had belonged to her father, who had died recently. Her parents had divorced when she was

five years old, and she was living through some of the memories of her life in relation to her parents.

L: She shared two candles that a group member had brought to her from Denmark, symbolising all the gifts that have been given to her since she moved into the neighbourhood. She also talked about the candle burning in the middle of the table; it was a steady symbol in her life, with the flame moving very little, but always moving and alive, taking her "through thick and thin."

Following the sharing, the group had a time of silence, followed by prayer where two women prayed out loud. After the prayer time the group sat in quietness; the women didn't want to leave. Quiet talk about the serenity the symbols of candles brought about. A woman observed that candles and the sea were both calming but they were very different. The sea was large and waves weren't that calm after all, the candle flame barely moved. I talked about symbols that become important to the women in their lives. All the women stayed to talk after the worship and reflection time. I drove one member home, and pastoral discussion ensued.

Homework: I asked the group to bring in any books they'd like to share with others in the group. I shared a feminist magazine called Everywoman and invited the women to take any issue home they thought would be relevant to their thinking. Then I asked them to take several copies of feminist cartoons from the Posy Simmons' collection, Pure Posy (2), and write a comment on them immediately after our meeting, then write

another comment right before the next one. Each cartoon dealt with a situation that women might face in everyday life in relation to men.

Before the discussion began in the October 1990 meeting, group members decided to ask me exactly why I had asked them specifically to be in the group. They said that their friendships were growing, and that they were amazed at how well they were relating to each other. I explained that I had seen a common busyness and sensed some dissatisfaction in each of the women, though I did not know what that dissatisfaction might be in each case. They asked why I did not have a more representative cross-section from the congregation. I explained that I was looking for common ground in some ways in this group, and had the thought of starting another women's group, open to any woman in the congregation or neighbourhood, which would address even wider issues than had arisen in Time Out. They affirmed this idea, and began to express a desire to share some of the things that were helpful to them in Time Out. (Latterly, several members started attending the second group in addition to Time Out, which started in the spring of 1991).

Group members then reacted to last month's homework, taken from Posy Simmons' cartoon collection,² by relating stories that they themselves had seen or been a part of in the world. There was general agreement that men and women's interaction could be especially problematic at work. Each cartoon was different, yet the women found a common strand in men's need to control how women functioned. I sensed some insight in

the group that they all experienced sexism, but not all had named it in those terms before. Some experience it at home, though two perceived that they did not. Others made excuses for the husbands not helping with housework or childcare at the level they might. A mixture of emotions revealed themselves as they had in the last meeting. Some women were feeling anger, frustration and/or depression.

One woman expressed her anger by dismissing men as "boys" who had to be indulged, then finally expressed her frustration at not having help around the house after a full day at work. Most talk centred on husbands, and various family situations were revealed more than they had been previously. Two women felt supported at home, though one woman thought that there was room for more equally shared domestic work. Others took almost total responsibility for running the household in addition to their jobs outside the home. One woman mentioned that she had to perform well in both her job and her home so that she could be seen to be coping with her life. Her self-esteem was based on being seen to function well.

Worship: I decided to end the evening without worship, to provide a contrast to the other meetings. I sensed the expectation of a liturgy at the end of the meeting, but simply did not initiate one.

Homework: The women were to draw their own bodies as well as an "ideal" body. If they did not wish to draw they were welcome to bring in pictures that would be the ideal body for them. In addition, newspaper or magazine articles that gave

women a message about their bodies were appropriate for discussion in the group. I simply wanted women to think about their own perceptions of their bodies, and what external influences had shaped those perceptions.

Social event: The group decided to "play" together by scheduling periodic social events, such as ten-pin bowling and having meals out. The friendships forming were becoming important outside of the group context.

The two meetings described above opened up discussion about women's interaction with men in the workplace and at home. Women's expressions of anger, depression, frustration, insecurity, guilt and a need-to-be-needed surfaced several times in each meeting. There was a growing vocalisation of discontent amongst the women, though their life-situations varied. Because the women were beginning to articulate their feelings about issues of role, self-esteem and interaction with others, they also were finding that they had many feelings in common. Group solidarity increased as the women began to trust each other and share more deeply those issues which were important to them.

In the November meeting, women initially expressed that they had felt cheated at not having worship last month. They found an act of worship important to their time together, and expressed the desire to continue having meaningful liturgy and prayer together. When pressed to share why worship was so important to them, they had trouble articulating their feelings. Some said they liked the peace, and especially the symbol of the candle. It was a centring time for one woman,

and made her feel as if her problems weren't as insurmountable as they sometimes seemed. Another said that she felt a real sense of God being amidst them, and that they were bound together especially at worship time. She felt a closeness coming from the group that she'd never experienced in a group before, or indeed with other friends.

One woman felt manipulated by not having something worshipful just to see how important it was to everyone by drawing a contrast. She had trouble articulating that she felt manipulated, but once she did and found that she was not met with anger, she began to comment on how freeing it was to expressing her feelings without feeling judged. After she shared her feeling, several others agreed with her; they had felt manipulated as well. I thanked the group for holding me accountable and sharing what they would like the group to do together instead of simply relying on my own decision-making.

Discussion about women's bodies ensued. One member brought in a picture of herself when she was in her teens, and stated that she wanted to look like that again. Others described or had drawn a figure slimmer than they were presently. One woman said that she could not draw her body, so she wrote what was a barrier for her doing the exercise instead. She indicated that she had had years of feeling inadequate about her body, based on its shape and what she assumed people thought. She also indicated that she had ^{had} several surgeries and pregnancy problems, and her body had let her down in a lot of ways. She was finding a great deal of suppressed anger about her body not functioning properly, but

acknowledging the anger was finally beginning to lead to healing. She also was able to begin grieving about her miscarriage ten years ago, and found this emotional outlet healing too. She did not want to draw a body that was "ideal" to her, because she was learning to accept her own as good enough!

Other women felt overweight and had negative self-images as a result. One woman was reasonably comfortable with her weight and one felt underweight, but didn't like being round-shouldered, and described her chronic health problem to the group. All were aware of the expectations they felt upon themselves based on other people's opinions, either parental, spousal, or through the media. Most felt that their self-images being based on outside opinion wasn't healthy, but also felt helpless about wading through all the emotion and finding the self-esteem that it would take to be able to become comfortable with themselves as they are. Colours of dress also became an issue, and I shared some insight about what colours can signify (e.g., someone who always wears blue likes to watch from the background and not draw attention to herself).³ Red was considered to be an angry colour. This information sparked interest, and showed that "body" didn't just mean shape, it meant self-projected "image" as well. I asked the women if they would like to change their understanding of body-image so that they became comfortable with who they were. Most answered that they preferred to change their bodies instead, though they were frustrated that they felt they had to be "good-looking" in addition to being

mothers, wives and other roles that they had in their lives.

Health issues were an important part of the discussion about women's bodies. The women felt that the health profession did not take women seriously, because of its male-dominated thinking. The doctor in the group agreed. Several women gave examples of how they had experienced various doctors dismissing their symptoms as "in their heads." One woman mentioned how so many women who had gynecological problems were simply told that they needed a hysterectomy, though that was not always the case. Another told how she was worried about her daughter's health, though she felt as if one particular doctor thought she was a neurotic mother who was over-reacting to the situation. The anger and frustration that each woman felt was expressed directly. The doctor in the group added that she had experienced being "second-class" in her own profession when she mentioned children's or women's specific health issues.

Several topics were raised in this meeting, which reflected the importance of the words listed in the first meeting. The women were unwittingly taking the words they had shared and working through their meaning in their lives. This meeting also allowed women to discover that the group members were facing a common problem together when dealing with health professionals and when dealing with their own body-images. They began to express their opinions and emotions about these issues, and found support through telling each other their stories and finding common experience. They also began to see how pervasive sexism is in the world around them.

Worship: The women shared a prayer together around a small table, with the lighting lowered and one candle lit. Then everyone spent some time in quietness, followed by mutual hugs and some backrubs to ease the tension of the evening.

Homework: I asked the group to do two assignments. First, the women were to read the article written by a psychiatrist in London about why some men hate women.⁴ To focus on increasing group solidarity as well as the significance of worship to women, I asked them to share with the group how they understood and felt about the communion we shared in Sunday worship in the church. I also gave them the option of writing a prayer that expressed how they were feeling at the time of sharing the eucharist.

In December 1990, the group began the meeting by alluding to the list of words the women had compiled in September. I asked if anyone had changed her mind about the positive or negative aspects of any of the more significant words. The underlined words, marriage, anger, separation, tears, weakness, acceptance, insecurity, sorrow, and control, were still talking points. Insecurity was a word that had the same, clear-cut negative connotations to all the women; they all believed that it held them back in their own lives. Several women indicated that they were concerned about their daughters learning about these aspects of their lives the "wrong" way, and made a commitment to bring them up in ways to encourage self-esteem. Two women were very interested in the list and thought that the underlined words were increasingly significant to group discussion. They decided

to keep the words in mind during future meetings to see where they might fit.

Celia Kitzinger's article about why men hate women triggered some strong response. The article itself attributed men's "hatred" of women to a long history of misogyny in the Judeo-Christian faith, as well as the development of more recent psychology. She wrote that women were considered to be very threatening to men because they were seen as sexually evil. Men were easily enticed by feminine wiles and supposedly would lose control of themselves when around women. Men thought that women had psychological control over them, according to Kitzinger.

Everyone in the group found the article accusing and extreme, and thought that it revealed a lot about the author, though one woman could see why she was writing the way she did. She claimed that the article brought the "battle of the sexes" out into the open, and that distrust seemed to be quite prevalent in today's world. She alluded to the Victorian attitudes that still exist today. Another woman exclaimed that sometimes women are worse than men, and gave the example that female gynaecologists are not as gentle as male. She raised an important point about women being divided from each other, but the group did not undertake discussion about the issue.

Several liked the idea that a Woman's Bible⁵ had been written though one woman didn't agree with the author that the Adam and Eve story was an example of patriarchal writing. Then the group reversed the question: do women hate men?

When men are around, women lose space, they claimed. Group members also saw that they were dependent on men in some ways, though often they felt they resented them. Most claimed that they did not hate men, though they felt a lot of anger toward some of the assumptions men made about them. They also pointed out that not all men could hate women because some men clearly preferred women's company. I asked why this might be the case, and one woman answered that men couldn't be themselves when around other men. Being emotional with other men was taboo. Being with women gave them a place to share more deeply what they were feeling.

When they critiqued the article itself, the women found that it was too short and compact; it really was an outline of a myriad of information instead of an article. They agreed that the language issue was important - the article claimed that "the English language had 220 words (almost all derogatory) for a sexually promiscuous female, and only 20 for a sexually promiscuous male (most of these complimentary)." ⁶ Words such as "whore," "loose," "tail," "tit," "pussy," "fast," etc. are examples of names given to women in a demeaning way. Men are called "hunk," "playboy," "lady's man," etc., and are not necessarily thought of in demeaning terms when promiscuous.

The women had grappled with some of the issues many feminist theologians and counsellors have been addressing in recent years. ⁷ They were aware that men turned to women for emotional support, but did not mention that they in turn, found emotional support from men. They also were

uncomfortable with what seemed like an attack on men to them by Celia Kitzinger. There was an unwillingness to agree with the statement that there is a general sense of misogyny in the world. Several women in the group disagreed with the article because their experience at home was that husbands could be supportive at times. Most reaction to the article seemed defensive, however, and there was an implicit desire to "protect" men from claims that Kitzinger made.

Finally, the women together looked at the significance of communion. Each woman had written her impressions of the impact communion had on her on a Sunday morning. One woman shared that communion was a quiet time and a time to thank God for the many gifts she has received. These services strengthened her faith and reassured her of God's presence. She regularly leaves with peace of mind and inner calm on communion Sundays. She and another woman objected to communion cards as used in the Church of Scotland, because to her, the word "communion" meant that no one should need a "ticket."

Another member of the group wrote the same feeling about communion; the quiet was valuable to her, and she felt close to God during the worship, especially in "the prayer time before the bread and wine are shared." One woman differentiated between styles of communion service (there are three different approaches to serving communion in the church the women attend), and said that the service where people sit in a circle and pass around the loaf and cup in silence spoke of God's presence and community more than the other services.

She felt more connected to the people around her in an informal setting where everyone could see each other. At a more traditional service, where the elements were passed up and down the pews, she felt less comfortable. When the ministers served her directly, she felt close to them, especially after she has talked through some difficulties with one of them. Close contact with others during communion was important to this woman.

Most of the group members agreed that the ritual itself was important to them, and it somehow gave them security. One woman believed that elders serving communion at the traditional service established a barrier between her and God. All the others liked it when the ministers served the communion directly (early morning service) to them. They also have been invited to finish the loaf of bread after the evening service where the congregation sat in a circle and enjoyed sharing that together. They said that the bread feeds their inner selves; they often found the experience quite powerful, because it signified both solitude and companionship, along with individual worth.

This description of powerful experience and the connection between solitude and companionship with worthiness was a major step in naming the feeling of wholeness for which group members were searching. Several members had defined one place where they could feel wholeness. The task became then to find out if this feeling could be experienced in other contexts as well.

Worship: I asked the women to share bread together,

sitting in a circle. As they passed the bread to each other, they thought about discussions they'd had in the group. I talked about how the bread is one loaf, but can be divided into smaller pieces. When there were lots of pieces, the loaf seemed to expand. Then the women all spent time in silence with the candle burning, followed by mutual hugs. Some tears flowed during this time of worship. The women were feeling their own connectedness and had shared that in liturgical form through sharing bread.

Homework: I asked the group members to write a worship service on their own during the January meeting. I would not be present while they created a liturgy. They were free to use resources available in the vestry if they wished. The group set a second date in January when members would all worship together, using the liturgy they had created. In January 1991, the group worshipped together with the liturgy six of the women had created. Then members discussed the process and feelings that went into preparation. None of the women had ever done this kind of exercise before. Below is the "order of service" that was handed to each member for the evening, modified by first initials representing individual women, instead of names.

Closing reading: TIME OUT WORSHIP

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for all that we have gained from spending time with each other. We thank you for L's insight in bringing us together. Thank you for creating this precious space for us - to be together, to grow together and to pray together. Amen.

Introduction to Lighting the Candles:

We light these candles tonight as symbols of the light that is spreading throughout our group.

F: This group is important to us because we can open our hearts and trust each other with our problems.

M: This group is important to us because it encourages us to focus on issues which matter to us and helps us to put them into proportion.

Ja: This group is important to us because it has deepened acquaintances into friendships. We have gained comfort and support and have shared tears and laughter.

R: This group is important to us because we now realise the importance of every woman's need for self esteem.

Je: This group is important to us because it has made us more aware of women's vulnerabilities and needs. It is no longer easy to accept the unacceptable. New doors are opening for us.

A: This group is important to us because we are no longer isolated. We look for each other in church, finding each other there adds to a feeling of peace and warmth. We care about each other.

L: (space left blank for facilitator's spontaneous words)

Closing reading:

We are a chosen people united in our vocation
When we stand together, we are the new creation
Holy the spirit that binds us
Holy our shared liberation.

The Introduction was followed by each woman lighting her candle from a central one as she spoke. Each candle was a different colour; each woman chose a colour, and by doing so, celebrated her uniqueness within connection.

The group described their process in forming worship together. As individuals, they felt that they could not actually tackle putting an act of worship together; however, when they came together and set the atmosphere by lighting a candle to begin their discussion, the task grew easier. Their idea was to put together some form of worship based on what had been striking them as individuals or as community or both since the group began to meet together.

Members discovered through discussion that what they had in common was an appreciation for the group work done together - the discovery and insight that had come to each of them, and the sense of support and friendship that resulted from the gatherings. They each expressed what the group meant to them in their own words, and then helped each other to articulate better what they were trying to say. During the time of feedback, each woman emphasised that her individual line in the "Introduction to the lighting of the candles" was usually

an expression which was shared by some or all of the women present. Ideas were written down as they were discussed.

Two women in the group felt that God was not mentioned enough, but others felt that the presence of God was assumed, and they didn't always have to name Him/Her (group's description).

They started their work by looking through books, but then decided that it was not meaningful to them to "parrot" traditional language - they were giving thanks for their own growth in their own words.

The women reiterated how difficult the task was; yet, once they started working, the liturgy began to flow. They wrote the opening prayer first, then found the closing sentences in WomanPrayer, WomanSong.⁸ They worked as a team to create the middle lines. The word "through" in the "Introduction" and the word "us" in each woman's sentence were very significant to the women and they spoke of their deliberation including those words. Finally, they felt they "owned" the liturgy because they had created it.

The group left a space for me to say words at the end of the "Introduction," and I expressed that the group was important to me because I could see God in the connections that were being made together. These words were followed by silence. I expressed that the one candle in the middle seemed to symbolise connection of each woman with God and with each other.

After worshipping and discussing the process of creating worship, the group shared how they were enabled to write and

worship as they did because of the support and feeling of strength they found in the group. I also sensed a real pride in their own abilities, which they had not tapped in this way before. The worship provided a sense of bringing together before God all the work the women had done to date. To celebrate themselves as women in the presence of God was important to the women, and enhanced the group experience. The liturgical act also showed the building of one piece of a wider koinonia that women had begun. They had spent months sharing their insecurities, anger, depression and perceptions of life. They were ready to take their issues and work with them so as to find greater health in their emotional and spiritual lives, as well as build community-within-community.

Synopsis

This series of meetings began to develop the issues that women had named in the initial meetings. The women began to grapple with the roles that they almost unthinkingly perform in their lives and whether they had healthy attitudes toward these roles. They also shared their views of themselves on a personal level, claiming again that self-esteem was the single most significant stumbling block for them. Worship took on a major role in group work together and called the group to be intentionally spiritual in their journey together and individually.

The next chapter will cover the group's movement up to the second worship service they created together in November 1991. The group dynamic changed as time progressed, and the

level of sharing increased for some women and decreased for others. The homework for the February session found in the next chapter was to take handouts of "Qualities" (2 human characteristics of human nature were given to each woman from The Book of Qualities⁹), and comment on them. at Tor Allen Centre, a counselling centre in Glasgow.

4. Kitzinger, Celia. "Why Men Hate Women." New Internationalist. No. 212, October, 1990. p.14.

5. Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. The Woman's Bible. New York: European Publishing Co., 1895.

6. Kitzinger, p. 15.

7. See Chapters Two and Four for historical and psychological treatment of women.

8. Winter, Miriam Therese. WomanPrayer: Women'sPrayers for Ritual. Philadelphia: Medical Mission Sisters, 1987.

9. Gendler, J. Ruth. The Book of Qualities. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1984.

ENDNOTES

1. Everywoman Magazine: Current Affairs for Women. London: Everywoman Publishing, Ltd.
2. Simmons, Posy. Pure Posy. London: Methuen, 1989.
3. Information taken from art therapy course at Tom Allan Centre, a counselling centre in Glasgow.
4. Kitzinger, Celia. "Why Men Hate Women." New Internationalist. No. 212, October, 1990. p.14.
5. Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. The Woman's Bible. New York: European Publishing Co., 1895.
6. Kitzinger, p. 15.
7. See Chapters Two and Four for historical and psychological treatment of women.
8. Winter, Miriam Therese. WomanPrayer. WomanSong: Resources for Ritual. Philadelphia: Medical Mission Sisters, 1987.
9. Gendler, J. Ruth. The Book of Qualities. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.

CHAPTER NINE: FINDING IDENTITY IN THE WOMEN'S GROUP

Yesterday, the telephone lines were down in the office. The women continued to share and work together in February 1991. They had become anxious to meet together and found one month between meetings too long. However, based on their schedules, they could not find much scope for more frequent meetings. This month the women shared what they had written about "Qualities," personified aspects of human feelings or character written by J. Ruth Gendler in The Book of Qualities.¹ Each woman wrote her response to the two she had received; the responses are recorded below just as they have been written. They vary in form according to how each woman wished to write.

Joy: includes aspects not usually associated with joy; obstacles on every path. Mostly outdoor images of movement. Waiting for us - to be like Joy, we must accept.

Guilt: tracking us down. Count images. Brutal silence. OR gossip. Trying not to feel effects of guilt - but never free completely. Guilt itself portrayed as wounded.

Confidence: Something I don't have and always wished I had. I don't however like this description of confidence. It appears to me to be describing someone bulldozing his/her way through life without a second thought for anyone else - very self-centred.

Protection: I like this. I have learned how to put up barriers to try to protect people I care about from finding out about my problems. I also try to do the same to protect myself from being emotionally hurt. I often wonder, though, if this is a sensible approach of facing up to life.

Urgency: urgency is a sprinting, rushing breathlessness. Not time to take five. When the telephone doesn't connect quickly enough, is not answered speedily enough, the check out queue, bus late, RUSH!! Gripped hands, tense muscles, headache throbbing, teeth-grinding urgency. He is someone I don't like.

Perfection - striving STOP leads to obsessive behaviour.
Best to have many aims Deep breath or it can be a
destructive force. Energy Take Five! be channelled into many
different things, not one thing. I recognise this as a flaw

Yesterday, the telephone lines were down in the office
for 20 minutes.

it niggles at me until I BLISS I am very intolerant of
imperfection in, say, my work. Literally, I cannot

After everyone is in bed, Television off. clear my eye - I must
clear it up. But this need to be surrounded by neatness and
order, uses up much of my Quiet space. Spring things, that way.

Good night Urgency! When I don't manage, or when I occasionally realise that
I am (e.g. if (son) wants attention or a
hug), it's very rewarding just to let go for a little while.

Trust: This group is trust, without doubts, caring and
friendship. Unloading worries, speaking openly, taken in
trust. Listening is trust, talking is trust. A rare balance
in today's gossipy world. A break of trust is not easily
built, always a fear of trust being severed. Confidence,
worth, reliability - all trust. Level, reliable, true.

Inspiration: Sums up a lot of what my new life is about.
Importance of taking time to listen - to God, to others, to
myself (increasingly, I find how right it is to follow my gut
feeling). Stop trying to fix things. Learn to accept what
you have to offer as a person - it is there, however deeply
buried. Stop trying to get the better of it.

Wisdom: Beautiful! It's so true - the answers come when I
stop looking for them, but to cultivate the quiet mind that
can give up looking is no easy task. What a lot there is to
gain from learning to be by ourselves. Being by myself is
not the same as having space - it is more than that and
harder to achieve. To be able to be happily alone with
oneself is a gift to be cherished and worked towards. When I
can be alone with myself I get a new perspective on life.
Balance is so important - when it is no longer there is the
time you realise its importance - lack of it brings me to a
gut reaction of panic and turmoil - no peace of mind. Whole
picture conjured up reminds me so much of my grandmother!

Contentment: stop striving for things that are not necessary
and fix priorities.

Excitement: remembered to enjoy - it is possible even if old
and grey.

Perfection: I am a slave to it because of my own obsession
with it. Setting standards too high causes tremendous strain
- "falling apart and dissolving into space" - makes you
realise that you are not God, and cannot maintain perfection
all the time. " . . . her greatest strengths grew out of her
strongest weaknesses."

Realising that you are not perfect and cannot attain
perfection makes you more tolerant of other people, and
hopefully of yourself.

Perfection - striving for it, leads to obsessiveness.

Best to have many aims and interests or it can be a destructive force. Energies need to be channelled into many different things, not one thing. I recognise this major flaw in myself. I am so obsessive about perfection that if I buy anything, especially clothing, with the slightest flaw in it, it niggles at me until I change it. I am very intolerant of imperfection in, say, my surroundings. Literally, I cannot lie at ease in bed if something messy catches my eye - I must clear it up. But this need to be surrounded by neatness and order, uses up much of my energy, in keeping things that way. When I don't manage, or when I occasionally realise that something else matters (e.g. if (son) wants attention or a hug), it's very rewarding just to let go for a little while. But I always go back to cleaning, organising in the end. I need order in my surroundings, THEN I can relax. (Perhaps this is possibly due to being in the teaching profession?)

Intelligence: "Sometimes intelligence is safe" - "reassuring" - being able to think things through logically can help to cope with difficult situations. Intelligence makes you question things, not accept them blindly, which would be the easier thing to do. Children's perception is less distorted than an adult's; less prejudices, "out of the mouths of babes" - truths.

Intuition: "Sometimes intelligence is dangerous:" - being too aware of the dangers of life can make you withdrawn/reclusive. Or if intelligence is applied to inadequate information, wrong conclusions can be drawn. There's a danger of thinking you know more than you really do. "Not afraid to change his mind" - the intelligent being will see that changing his [sic] mind is not 'losing face' or being weak. It takes more courage to admit that you have changed your mind.

After sharing their responses to the words I had assigned each woman, the group members challenged me about why I had chosen the qualities I did for each of them. The members were not convinced that it was fairly random, and implied that I had tried to match the words with my own judgment about their personal issues. I chose words from the book that had come up significantly in discussion in previous meetings, and then randomly assigned two to each woman. Several members were not satisfied with my answer, but did not pursue the matter. Some believed that the words did not

match them very well. The group was holding me accountable for my choices, and believed that they might be being labelled by the words that had been given to them. They were not happy with this kind of arrangement, though they found the exercise valuable.

The fact that several women believed that they were being labelled by me showed me that they were very sensitive to other's opinions about them. It also showed that preceived labelling made them uncomfortable and at times, angry. They assumed that they were being labelled when I assigned them words. They would have preferred a more democratic way of handling the situation and challenged me over this kind of "top-down" leadership. This confrontation may have been a challenge to a hierarchical move that I had made within the group.

After the challenge, the women expanded on the comments they had written. Some felt that the qualities they'd been given spoke to them specifically, and others thought theirs didn't apply too well, though the group agreed that there was something in all of the qualities that was relevant for the group. A discussion about women's guilt opened up, and members described their current stance on their own guilt. All but one woman were feeling less guilt about claiming space. One member rarely claimed it. Several noticed changes in their family relationships as they made claims for themselves. As they began to refuse to be the family servant, they were encountering anger from family members, followed eventually by more shared responsibility around the

house. n to them, and some did. I understand now the others

The issue of finding space still remains one of the most significant for women in the group, in terms of self-esteem and feelings of guilt when not "doing for others." Group members' reactions to the Qualities showed the ongoing struggle with guilt and finding time for oneself, in addition to having friends' support. A subtle thread found in the reactions to the words inspiration, contentment and perfection shows how several women still focus on their own servant roles or high self-expectations. The writing shows women being self-evaluative and trying to define what would be healthier modes of living for them. group were "good,"

Worship: We lit the candle, and read a Celtic prayer from David Adam's Tides and Seasons.² The women then sat in silence for a few minutes and followed this quiet time with hugs. g the exercise. Another observed that she felt ad

Homework: I asked the women to write on a card three reasons why they liked themselves, and then to write a card for each person in the group, with three (or more) reasons why they liked her. This assignment was met with incredulous faces and a general sense of "I can't do that!"

In the March 1991 meeting, each woman passed a card to the six other women with three or more reasons why she liked her. The women kept the "I like myself" cards. Then I asked each woman to read all the cards that she had in her possession aloud. themselves in a positive way. The emotional response

Each woman became very emotional during the time she was reading. They all had trouble accepting what the others had

written to them, and some didn't understand how the others found all these positive qualities in them. Several women cried. I told them that they each had in their possession over twenty-one qualities that other women liked in them. There was a time of silence as women read silently through the cards again.

In writing the exercise, several women said that they had trouble finding the words they wanted, and they preferred to explain what they liked about people in person; the words sounded inadequate on paper. They also found it difficult to write their emotions when they are so used to suppressing them. Two women concluded that if the group were "good," then they must be a part of that goodness. However, two women found nothing that they liked about themselves.

One woman was worried about stirring up difficult emotions during the exercise. Another observed that she felt as if she were giving a gift when she told someone what she liked in her. They all were going to put their cards where they could look at them again. I shared a quote I'd heard long ago with them - "Self-esteem is the reputation you have with yourself."

The women had claimed in the earliest meetings of the group that their self-esteem was based on what other people thought of them. In this exercise, they received cards which affirmed who they are and they also were challenged to think about themselves in a positive way. The emotional response showed how the women were vulnerable to others' opinions, but also how they had become used to thinking negatively of

themselves. The discovery of feeling cared about/love moved each woman. It seems that many of the group members do not experience feeling loved for their own sakes very often.

Worship: All the candles used in the worship service that the women wrote last month were used again, and the women were asked to name a gift that they had received in life that they would like to pass on to their children. Worship closed with Celtic prayer and sharing of silence followed by hugs.

Homework: The women were asked to bring in symbols that spoke to them about International Women's Day. I also asked them to add one thing to the "I like myself because" card. Finally, each woman was asked to make a collage, or write out on a piece of paper what was important to her in life. They were to put themselves in the middle of the paper, then surround themselves with pictures or words of what or who is most important to them, working in concentric circles outward with things or relationships that are less important to them. They were to note what characteristics parents had passed down to them in their lives.

I told the group that I was interested in their perceptions of the images of God at that time. Had these images changed since the group started or not?

After the initial sharing time in the April meeting, the women explained the symbols they had brought to the group. These symbols included household cleaning goods, one tampon, some milk, perfume and jewellery, a driving license, the pill, a wooden spoon, a purse and a diary. Each item reminded the group of some aspects of life that women deal

with daily, and the women remembered that not all women had what they have. There was a sense of remembering other women in the world who were oppressed in different ways. The solidarity of the group again focused outside itself, to bring about an understanding that all women had significant issues of oppression with which to deal.

Next, the group turned to sharing collages or thoughts about their important relationships. Two women had used large sheets of paper; one had pictures and words from magazines and explained what was important to her in her life. The other had used written words, but the same process. Many had not had a chance to do the exercise because of the lack of time. Some were able to share verbally what was most important to them, and then what had been passed down from the previous generation to them. One member got in touch with some anger toward her grandmother, and how her grandmother had treated people so poorly. Others opened up a little about their backgrounds, and were able to make some general connections between their parents' and grandparents' behaviour and their own. The women began to see that they were not operating in a vacuum in terms of how they functioned in life. They had inherited ways of coping, though some consciously rejected behaviour they had learned in the past.

With a greater understanding of the significance of learned behaviour and how relationships from the past affected the present approach to life, I asked the women to talk about their current images of God. All of the women still saw God

in terms of male image, though most were open to a female image as well. One woman said she attended the church because she sensed that there was scope for a female God within it. (She had indicated earlier that her parents had divorced when she was five and she stayed with her mother. I wondered if there might be a connection between the female image for her and her understanding of mother as care-taker). Another member re-defined God as "Friend," and preferred a less hierarchal view of the stereotypical Almighty Father. Another woman agreed with her, and liked the idea of Friend; she had often thought of God in that way. One member said that God was above all this anyway. It was unclear whether she meant hierarchically "above," or simply beyond discussion or metaphor. However, others saw the importance of discussing how they "see" God in their mind's eye. The "Friend" image was new for some women. They had claimed after the worship in January that they had seen God in their own friendships. The increasing intimacy with their friendships and the relationship/friendship with God tied together for most women.

Worship: The women remembered other women in the world together, and had some silent time. The group closed with prayers where each woman could share her own concerns if she wished. The worship time was followed by mutual hugs.

Homework: The women were asked to write their own funerals, and how they wished to be remembered. I asked them to keep the discussion about important relationships and how they saw their parents and grandparents in mind during this

exercise. There was a sigh of relief from two women - writing a funeral for them was much easier than some of the previous homework assignments, they claimed.

During the May meeting, some women shared that they found the funeral-writing exercise difficult. Others had already thought about their funerals before then. Some chose hymns and settings for the service, and one asked for silence, so that she could have some quiet time at her own funeral. This was the same woman who had enjoyed time in her office when the phone lines had not been working. She mentioned a poem that she had heard at a recent funeral of a friend, and found that it was difficult to talk about her friend's death. Another woman specified that she wanted her ashes scattered at a place near the water where she spent time. Her hymns included water images. She also had chosen what kind of flowers she would like at her service. Several others had hymns in mind for their funerals. Each woman wanted to be remembered in terms of caring for others and "living life to the full." Some especially mentioned that they'd like people to remember their senses of humour. One woman said that the funeral was going to be the only thing that was really her own.

Discussion followed about thinking about their own deaths. Some were nervous about the concept, and two were quite comfortable. One even had a good idea of when she was going to die. These thoughts and the sharing led to some reminiscing about parents' deaths, and one woman said that she was still working on trying to deal with all of that.

Women who still had their parents or a parent felt unsure of how they would handle the loss of both. One woman shared that her father had been quite ill, and she was learning how to handle that sense of possible loss.

The women began to discuss their belief in life after death and what heaven might be like. No one had definite pictures in her head of what the afterlife might be; several women expressed fear of death for that reason. Nobody seemed to believe in the "traditional" hell, where there was eternal damnation. They grappled with ideas of what life might look like after death, but concluded that they simply had to trust that God would take care of things.

By thinking about how they wanted to be remembered when they died, the women defined for themselves how they wanted to live the rest of their lives. Senses of humour and "living life to the fullest" seemed to strike chords with all the women, though they did not define what the latter phrase meant for them.

Worship: The group went into the sanctuary, and I put a tape of Medieval English music on the stereo. I asked the women to find their own places in the church, wherever they wished, and feel the space and think their own thoughts or have their own prayers. I lit a candle in two sections of the church. After some time, I asked them to come together around the communion table, and joining hands, everyone had a prayer together, followed by hugs.

Homework: The women were to write how they'd grown in the last year, and how/if their relationship with God had

changed. They also were asked to think where they'd like the group to go from here.

The June 1991 meeting marked the one-year anniversary for Time Out meeting together. The women had given some thought to the changes in their lives, though some found the exercise challenging.

One woman produced a long list of the changes she found within herself. She had gained confidence, named herself a "feminist," recognised the importance of women's friendship, and discovered that it wasn't so bad to ask for help when she needed it. She also distinguished between being assertive without being aggressive. She shared that she could acknowledge her anger and deal with it appropriately and directly now instead of in a more destructive manner as she had in the past.

Another member said that she was able to share personal problems more easily, and was more assertive. Another woman wrote that she gained a greater understanding of why she was the way she was, and that understanding has bolstered her confidence in herself. She found it important that the common factor that all the women present had was a faith in God. She also had changed her attitude toward friendship, and knew what it was like to have deeper relationships with friends. A fourth member indicated that she was more aware of her own worth, and could be more assertive because of that. She was aware now of her need for space, but still was not achieving finding time for herself the way she wanted to; she also was more aware of women's needs in general.

Assertiveness and guilt issues were universal growth points in the group, though several members qualified these points by saying that they still weren't where they wanted to be. Another woman continued to celebrate the support and sharing that continued in the group and said that her other "relationships" with friends outside of the group seemed shallower to her now. The sixth member enjoyed the reading opportunities that were available for the group as each woman brought in books that were important to her or simply "good reading."

The group moved in to a discussion about whether their relationships with God had changed in the last year. Several points were made: "I have relaxed with God and have a deeper trust in Her (woman's pronoun choice), I can hand over to God when I can no longer cope. God is comfortable. It's fine to have doubts. I see God in other faces and places and am more ready to listen to God. I feel communication from God through sermons. I don't need formulas to communicate with God. God is in connection. The bible isn't literal, and that's ok."

Each woman indicated that her relationship with God was very important to her. One said that she was reminded of meetings of the disciples when Time Out met together; she thought the personal attention and the act of gathering together were very similar and important.

The group discussed concepts of God being an increasingly close friend. They also talked about prayer changing from deliberate time set aside for communication to a running

conversation with God in their heads. As the conversation closed, I asked where the women would like to go from this point.

One member thought that the group should focus more on the differences among the women while recognising that "sameness" is not the equivalent of "closeness." She indicated that the group seemed "stuck" in thinking about how its members were the same, and that felt alien to her. She did not feel as if she were the same as several others in the group, though she shared common experience and closeness with most of them.

"Sameness" took away her individuality, and she was uncomfortable with the assumption she perceived that group members saw themselves as very similar personality types.

There also was a general feeling that the group needed to begin to look "outward" instead of "inward" so much. Two women were struggling with internal issues and had begun to feel that group and self-focus could be dangerous if it became the primary agenda of the group. They did not explain further why it would be dangerous. However, they raised the question of how this kind of experience could be shared with other women.

Homework: In light of the group's comments, I asked if anyone would be willing to bring in an article that seemed to address some of the issues that the group had talked about in the last year. One member said that she'd bring in an article about the "female condom" that she'd seen. She found the whole concept very negative and wondered what the group would think.

Worship: I lit a candle and the group had the silent time that had become so important to them. Members shared a prayer together, and gave thanks for a good year. Prayer was followed by hugs.

The group did not meet in July because most members were away with their families on holiday. At the August meeting, the group discussed the female condom which has recently been introduced as an option for the birth control industry. One member brought in copies of the article she had mentioned in June.

The reaction to the female condom was negative in general. The woman who had brought in the article objected to using a male name for a female contraceptive device. She also pointed out the practical problems of using something of that nature. One woman was simply repulsed. Another said that it seemed hard to believe that contraception was such a difficult issue for the whole medical profession. Women's bodies weren't taken seriously. One member believed that the whole issue was a responsibility issue. Who was responsible for contraception during sex? Why was it almost always the woman? And if the woman left it up to the man, she couldn't necessarily guarantee that he'd take the responsibility seriously ALL THE TIME (her emphasis).

General discussion followed about women's issues in the news, and they all mentioned the bias that they see in all areas of media and in the professions. Advertisements that included "sexy" women selling cars or beer were insulting. Professional women found themselves having to be "twice-as-

good" in their work to be taken seriously by men, the women claimed. Some anger about women's position in the world was expressed, though most women felt helpless about the situation. One said that she was constantly writing letters to companies and organisations to protest against sexist advertising. The women did not like the message that children were receiving about women through the media.

Worship: The candle was lit, and I added to the table a one-foot high glass-blown female figurine, who was dancing with a long ribbon over her head. She had been given to me by a member of the group. I asked the women to describe their perceptions of her. Some said joyful, celebrating life, others said poised, and they all agreed that she looked free. We looked at the figurine by candlelight in silence, and I turned her occasionally so that we all had a chance to see all sides of her. Then the group shared prayer and hugs.

Homework: I asked group members to "lead" three meetings, with a pair taking each. We drew names out of a hat to determine who worked with whom. They were to choose any topic they liked and present it in any form. I also asked them to write another worship service together in October to share in November. I would not be with them at the October meeting.

The two women responsible for leading the September 1991 meeting chose to look more closely at the difference between self-esteem and selfishness. They said, to open the discussion, that they had spent a long time one evening talking about the difference between these two issues. They

and the group raised several points: "Time" is supposed to be given to others; to TAKE (their emphasis) it is not "nice." A lot of women need to give. One woman asked, "how are our egos fed by giving all the time?" Another pointed out that women are not good at accepting kindness and don't feel that they deserve it. But if they work to be indispensable to people, then they are getting their own self-value externally instead of defining it for themselves.

"Selfishness," one woman said, "goes with laziness." I asked the group what Jesus did about time and space? They acknowledged that he took it when he needed it. I then asked them where the grace was for themselves? Several women answered by saying that they could take time for God, because the relationship with God was the meaning for being. Their space in community was important too, during communion especially. However, if there was no space, God seemed to slip away, according to one woman. Being in church provided space if the Sunday worship services were not filled with too many words. Thus, several concluded, taking time for God was not selfish, though taking time for oneself might be. Others disagreed, because they believed that women's personal needs and emotions do count and deserve time. Women eat food, but won't feed themselves emotionally, one member contended.

The topic moved again to space for women; is having too much space the equivalent of being aimless? Questions arose about whether or not the space is controlled - what do I do? Too many worries cropped up in one woman's experience. Space

was less valuable if women are forced to have it because of personal illness or illness in the family. One woman indicated that she found many women to be afraid of having space, because that led to feeling guilty and selfish; "with space, women had to face things," she said.

The group then turned to self-esteem. The word insecurity came up immediately and was equated with low self-esteem. I challenged the group here, and asked what total security would look like. Some said that secure people seem smug, and a totally secure situation might be boring or even suffocating. Then there was the question: is insecurity "built in"? Maybe it is a factor in the human need for movement. Can one have self-esteem in a state of insecurity? The women brought up examples of how they might do that: have supportive friends whom they can trust, find someone who listens, come to Time Out, have something to offer in a secure situation, have someone to believe in them, and find women with common experience, such as mothering while working too.

One woman raised the point that if insecurity and low self-esteem were assumed to be related, did that mean that working for self-esteem was selfish? Another believed that selfishness was determined by the amount of time a woman spent on herself. The motive (her emphasis), for spending time on herself was also a factor in defining selfishness. If other people benefitted from a woman having time on her own, then it wasn't selfish according to this member. Thus, the argument came back to women being stuck on giving all the

time. Time to oneself needed to be governed by personal recovery needs, desire for escape, the "I want," and "I deserve" motives insisted two women, contrary to the rest of the group's opinion.

Again, the conversation turned to space. The women thought that their children were beginning to understand that they needed time on their own. Space could also be found with another person in close relationship. The group continued to question whether space was necessary for women to develop higher self-esteem than they had.

The group turned briefly to discussion about sharing emotion and crying. One member observed that crying was uncomfortable and other people were uncomfortable when someone cried - there was no way to "fix" the person. Another observed that men don't want women to cry because they feel out of control of women when there are tears. Most women felt uncomfortable about crying in front of anyone else. They felt that it was unacceptable to show powerlessness and lack of control, and one woman defined showing tears as "weak."

The last thought for the evening was an affirmation of the group's friendship. The women described Time Out as: a sharing in confidence, different level of friendship, being there, acceptance, no rivalry, equality, learning, no envy or pity. There was a sense of celebration in these acknowledgements.

It seemed to have become important for the group to acknowledge verbally its friendships each month, in addition

to the group work which members carried out. The struggle to define whether women were selfish or simply had greater self-esteem than previously when they took time for themselves had been a topic referred to for over a year. For the women to feel more autonomous in their lives, they knew that they needed to be more assertive about their own space. Several found this assertion very difficult; one experienced abuse at home when she began to take time. She shared her situation with the group, and members began to focus more and more on her problem.

Worship: Candle was lit in the middle of the floor and shared prayers were offered, followed by hugs.

Homework: Write another worship service without the facilitator being present during the month of October.

(During October, I gave each woman small meditation books for daily readings as part of the spiritual and emotional journey which the group work had facilitated to a degree.)

In November the group worshipped together in much the same fashion as it had in January. I was given the following order of service when I arrived at the meeting.

Reading from the Book of Meditations

All: When we love ourselves, there is no limit to the amount of love we can share. But loving can never be self-centered because we should, need to, or want to get something in return. Love is energy that is shared because we have it.

Prayer: We are not alone

Hi: O Lord of grace and life and hope, help us to take the next step on our journey.

Ja: For when we look into ourselves and work on our hearts, we sometimes are overwhelmed by the failures and weaknesses we find, and we are gripped by fear and doubt.

M: But when we are TIME OUT WORSHIP

F: (as the candle is lit) We all give thanks, God, for our sharing together - the tears, the pain, the hugs, the fun.

L: Reading from Sirach 6: 14-17

Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter:
whoever finds one has found a treasure.

Je: Faithful friends are beyond price:
no amount can balance their worth.

Lo: Faithful friends are life-saving medicine:
and those who fear the Lord will find them.

All: Those who fear the Lord direct their friendship aright,
for as they are, so are their neighbours also.

R: We light our individual candles from our shared 'Time Out' candle. What we need now, God, is the wisdom to know in which direction to take the light. If you want us to be Fishers of Women, we need your help.

Music - Taize: O Lord, Hear My Prayer

A: Reading from Sirach 14: 11-14

My child, treat yourself well, according to your means, and present worthy offerings to the Lord. Remember that death does not tarry, and the decree of Hades has not been shown to you. Do good to friends before you die, and reach out and give to them as much as you can. Do not deprive yourself of a day's enjoyment; do not let your share of desired good pass by you.

Reading from the Book of Meditations

All: When we love ourselves, there is no limit to the amount of love we can share. But loving can never be manufactured because we should, need to, or want to get something in return. Love is energy that is shared because we have it.

Prayer: We are not alone

M: O Lord of grace and life and hope, help us to take the next step on our journey.

Je: For when we look into ourselves and back on our past, we sometimes are overwhelmed by the failure and weakness we find, and we are gripped by fear and doubt.

Ja: We live in eternity

M: But when we offer up our fearful doubt to Jesus, we are grasped and lifted up - again and again and again.

All: The Lord is in this place

Je: Yes, if we journeyed alone under our own strength, certainly the wilderness would swallow us. We would choose our way instead of being led by God to the way of life.

M: But we are not alone. For Jesus, the sovereign of all life, has promised that where two or more gather in his name, there he will be in their midst.

of the liturgy for the second time, one member of the group

Je: Where God is present with God's people, there mercy, kindness, love and understanding flow like new wines. Lord, cast out our fears so that our hearts may be open to your love and to one another.

used in this way. Two others

All: In Jesus' name, Amen.

and that they weren't out to prove anything about their

Reading - For a New Day

writing abilities. Another member of the group said that she

Ja: God of Time

found the God of Space easy, and easier to work with

Fill this moment

because the God of Motion. She did not spend much

With your grace.

worrying about the God of Peace and if it were possible, but

God of Motion

was able to give release. In liturgy, because the words were

From each sin

what she was able to do. All agreed that they preferred

Give release.

simple language. It did be seen in our work on the

God of Quiet

prayer that the members were themselves: "I need your

God of Might

help."

Keep us ever

Closing: With Us

In your sight.

prayer that the members were themselves: "I need your

Ja: The Lord is here

All: His Spirit is with us

more comfortable this time. They did enjoy it.

R: We are surrounded by love

All: His Spirit is with us

Andles, and

A: We are immersed in peace

All: His Spirit is with us

found it peaceful. However, several times it did not work.

L: We rejoice in hope

All: His Spirit is with us

M: We travel in faith

All: His Spirit is with us

that singing together might be enjoyable

Ja: We live in eternity
All: His Spirit is with us

All: The Lord is in this place
His Spirit is with us³

When asked how the group process worked during the creation of the liturgy for the second time, one member of the group said that she had been dissatisfied with how little "original" material they'd used in this service. Two others believed that the words said what they'd wanted them to say, and that they weren't out "to prove anything" about their writing abilities. Another member of the group said that she found the words appropriate, and easier to worship with because they were not her own. She did not spend time worrying about her contribution and if it were adequate, but was able to relax into the liturgy, because the words said what she wanted them to say. All agreed that they preferred simple language, which could be seen in one part of the prayer that the members wrote themselves: "we need your help."

When asked how the group functioned in comparison to the last time they created worship, all members said they felt more comfortable this time. They'd enjoyed looking at liturgical resources, assumed together that they would use candles, and wanted to use Taize music because each woman found it peaceful. However, several women did not want to add any singing to the order of service because of discomfort with their own voices and the small numbers. Others thought that singing together might be enjoyable.

The order of service "felt right," with the exception of the one member emphasising again that she would have liked more originality. Another member agreed. However, they had all struggled to make sure that wording was "just right," either in the prayers or litanies taken from books, or in the prayer they'd written together. "Fishers of women" was a phrase that pointed to the future task of the group. "God of space" was important because finding space continued to be a struggle for group members.

The women had chosen the scripture reading from the apocryphal book Sirach, because several of them had heard the facilitator use a reading about friendship at a worship service shared with women in a Catholic monastery at harvest time. They asked questions about why Protestants did not have such helpful and beautiful books in the bible, and why the Catholic Church had retained them.

The creative process was described as "satisfying," "fun," "comfortable," and was underlined by the fact that the women knew each other better than the last time they created worship together. Last January they had been celebrating their identity as a group. This month they were celebrating their identity as it had grown, but also were thinking about the future of the group and its meaning. All the women indicated again that they hoped to be catalysts for other women benefitting from group work.

I asked the group to describe the difference in their feelings when worshipping this time compared to January. Most felt more comfortable in the second experience; two

women felt that the January worship had been more prayerful and connected. Others felt less at ease in January, because they had used their own words. Two indicated that they'd had a greater sense of "moving experience" when reading the order of service for the first time, before the actual act of worship occurred. Various members pointed out that any reaction is based on a woman's mood at the time.

Three women wanted to create worship again, but not on a regular basis; they considered this process "special" and did not want it to become routine. One member summed up the discussion by telling the group that she felt much more aware of God than she ever had, and that her faith was becoming increasingly deeper.

The women did not mention in the group a concern that had arisen outside of the meetings. Two women felt that another member was trying to take over the group, especially when the facilitator was not present, and that there were some power struggles going on very subtly. One woman expressed to me that she felt that sharing time at the beginning of each meeting was focusing more and more on one or two people and others had decided not to share anymore. There was a sense of increasing, though unspoken conflict, growing in the group. Yet, the members continued to celebrate their friendship, though two began to be increasingly wary. They did not address this issue in the group directly.

Homework: Je and A were in charge of leading the next meeting. Group members were given an article to read about communicating with children about sexuality.

The meeting was closed with prayer. The entire evening was conducted by candlelight, with the exception of the sharing time in the beginning of the meeting.

Synopsis

The group work to date has shown the journey Time Out was experiencing together from the first meeting until approximately eighteen months later. Once friendships and common experiences were established, the women began to talk about issues important to them on an increasingly deep level. Sharing time at each meeting became more focused, and as time progressed, two women were especially taking most of the time at the beginning of meetings. I, as facilitator, began to see a need to limit this time so that the group could cover issues which had arisen from homework the previous month. By November 1991, there arose an issue of domination and subordination with some of the group members, though no one in the group seemed willing to address this issue directly. Some members did not seem to recognise that a conflict was developing, while two or three others did.

The next chapter covers the continuing meetings of Time Out up to March. At the March meeting, the "research" aspect of the group will be complete due to academic deadlines, but the group will continue to meet with its current membership until May, after which the facilitator moves away. The group decided to write worship together for the May meeting, with the facilitator present. Members wanted to grieve together.

ENDNOTES

1. Gendler, J. Ruth. The Book of Qualities. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988.

2. Adam, David. Tides and Seasons. London: SPCK/Triangle Books, 1989.

3. Adam, David. Tides and Seasons. House, Garth. Litanies for All Occasions. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1989.
Schaef, Anne Wilson. Meditations for Women Who do too Much. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1990.

CHAPTER TEN: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE IN THE WOMEN'S GROUP

In December 1991, the meeting opened with an exchange of Christmas cards followed by sharing time where everyone expressed their exhaustion with Christmas preparation.

After discussing the trappings of Christmas, two women led the meeting by sharing a newspaper article called "It's time to treasure the value of the gift of love."¹ The article dealt with teaching girls to have a healthy attitude toward their own bodies and sexuality. It also referred to pressures that girls have on them to have sexual intercourse before they are necessarily ready.

Group discussion about the newspaper article centred on how mothers could approach their daughters about the topic of sex, as well as teach them that their decision-making needed to be based on their own desires and moral standards, not on peer pressure. They appreciated the writer's candid language and fresh outlook about the topic, and hoped that they could communicate in the same way with their daughters.

One woman was concerned that her daughters were not getting adequate sex education in the school. What education they did receive was simply factual and did not involve discussion about morals and responsible decision-making. It also did not encounter the issue of alcohol consumption, which often led to sexual behaviour without clear thinking.

Birth control and A.I.D.S. were other issues of concern, and one woman said that she would make sure that her

daughters had condoms with them or at least knew where to get them when they began dating.

Discussion moved to the pace of development in girls, and the women shared some of their own stories about how they felt when they matured physically either early or late. Body image and size also was an important issue, and some women expressed that they had suffered either embarrassment or ostracism or both because of differing maturation rates. One woman wasn't happy about physically maturing at all as a girl, while others claimed that they could not wait.

I wondered aloud if sexuality needed to be addressed exclusively with girls. What was the parental responsibility toward boys? The women who had sons hoped that the boys had enough respect for other human beings that they would never harm anyone mentally or physically. However, they believed that the emphasis needed to be on girls' attitudes and self-esteem more than boys in the immediate future. The women's perspective was that girls are more likely to develop negative self-images if they are sexually active than boys. Boys gain a "positive" reputation when they are sexually active and girls gain a negative one. Girls also had to deal with the pregnancy issue when thinking about sex and their bodies. Boys did not, except indirectly.

Sexuality was a difficult issue to discuss for some women, although when they were talking about educating their daughters, they found the topic easier. Two women talked with me privately about sexuality outwith the meeting at a later date. Again, the issue of stereotypes toward women

arose in relation to female bodies. The women also were anxious that their daughters made decisions about sexual activity within a moral framework. They wondered if the church could provide a sex education programme that would deal with the emotional and moral issues involved.

One woman emphasised that she did not want her daughter to understand sex as "dirty," though she did not want her to be promiscuous either.

Worship: Two women had to leave early, so we had a short worship time before they left. We had a Christmas blessing and candlelight and prayers and hugs. After they left, the remaining women sat in different corners of the room each with her own candle and listened to a story from Friedman's Fables, called "Jean and Jane."² The story told about women comparing themselves to each other, and finding out that they each wanted what the other had.

Then the women in the room had another prayer together. They were invited to take the candles home so that they could light them during some of their own quiet time. Each woman was grateful for the thought, especially during the Christmas season.

The January 1992 meeting consisted of the last pair of women leading the evening. One woman handed out a copy of the prayer The Ways of The Lord to the group ahead of time. The prayer discussed is printed as follows:

evening told the group. Prayers changed with a variety of... moved from "I need" statements to "please help" statements... She was proud of the fact that the topic for the evening...

THE WAYS OF THE LORD

I asked God for strength
that I might achieve--
I was made weak that I
might learn humbly to obey

I asked for health
that I might do greater things--
I was given infirmity
that I might do better things

I asked for riches
that I might be happy--
I was given poverty
that I might be wise

I asked for all things
that I might enjoy life--
I was given life
that I might enjoy all things

I got nothing
that I asked for--
but everything that I had hoped for
Despite myself
my prayers were answered--
I am among all men [sic]
most richly blessed.

look beyond their own - An Anonymous Soldier

The two women introduced this prayer and discussed the importance of prayer for them. One woman told the group that prayer had become increasingly important to her since she had been attending the group. She had concluded that God "listens," but doesn't need human prayers. "We need to pray," she said. Faith becomes important when people grow up enough to see the hurdles and accept the negative events in life; that is when God shows up, one of the leaders of the evening told the group. Prayers changed with maturity; they moved from "I need" statements to "please help" statements. She was proud of the fact that the topic for the evening

dealt directly with a faith issue instead of a more specific social issue.

The other leader had read the prayer and found that it strove for balance in the attitude to life. Compromise is part of life - it part of adjusting to living and accepting failures. She also pointed out that life was full of surprise and new perspective if human beings were willing to look for these things; security often did not come from whence one expected it. She described the writer's acknowledging that he did not have control over his life, but God did. Another member of the group stated that the whole idea was being open to not (her emphasis) being in control.

The group began to discuss the difference in attitude between the soldier as cited above and people who are bitter. Several thought that bitter people were selfish and would not look beyond their own interests. Bitter people's attitudes hurt themselves and eventually led to their own isolation. I asked the group if they thought bitter people might feel helpless and have a lot of unresolved anger within them. The women played with the idea, but wanted to know how to help them change their attitudes. The women discussed how to help people become "unstuck," in the sense of opening doors for new ideas and approaches to life for people.

Then the group discussed what they had experienced that had been a surprise from God's hand. Again, the group unanimously believed that Time Out was a significant surprise to them. Several women described traumatic experiences through which they had lived, and how people had arrived just

at the right moment. They saw the presence of God in the help they received during these events.

The tone of the meeting was quiet and slightly stilted at times. I sensed the conflict about who was in control behind some of the unusual silences from two or three women. The only women who shared deeply were the leaders that evening. The group felt directionless in terms of what to do with the prayer that had been offered to them to discuss. There also was a "heaviness" about most of the women there. The group was not interacting in the way it had in the past. I attributed this state to unresolved conflict between certain members along with a lack of focus during the month before each meeting led by others because no homework had been issued.

Worship: The group sat in candlelight and combined quiet time with silent and spoken prayers. Each woman read one stanza of the soldier's prayer aloud. The hugs were slightly more restrained after this worship.

Homework: Each woman was given a sheet that asked her to grapple with the issues of anger, fear and depression in her life. The group was to write down things that made them angry or that they feared, and whether they could see a positive side to anger, fear and/or depression.

In February 1992, the group discussed the questions they'd worked on through the month on anger, fear and depression. Members also looked at the word list that they'd compiled in September 1990 and wrote their impressions of two words that were most significant to them at the current time.

One woman in the group chose the word "silence." She enjoyed times of silence experienced when walking in the country, in church, or with friends. However, she found that silence had been used against her by her husband as a punishment when he was angry with her. The word evoked mixed feelings in her.

Two women chose the word "acceptance." One resented the fact that her husband assumed that she should take care of the children on weekends while he went to football games - acceptance to her meant something she should do in her marital situation. The word had negative connotations for her in this sense. She decided to confront her husband about the situation recently instead of simply accepting it. She also thought of acceptance in terms of "letting go" when referring to the constant demands for house cleaning in a home where two small children live. Accepting the situation that she cannot change could be a positive step for her. Another woman had always understood acceptance to be a negative word until recently. She claimed that she had learned the difference between blind acceptance of her situation and a positive, active decision that is acceptable, though not necessarily ideal.

Two women also chose "quality time" from the list. One woman combined the phrase with "reflection," because she thought of them in synonymous terms. Quality time allowed her to find ways of putting life in perspective and figure out coping strategies. The other woman also saw quality time in positive terms, but claimed that she still found that it

felt like "stolen time" when she had a chance to do what she wanted. "Anger" was another word that two women shared in common. One woman believed that her anger with her children potentially damaged them; she felt destructive when she lost her temper. However, she also believed that she could only address some equality issues, as she put it, with her husband through her anger. Otherwise, she was not taken seriously. The woman did not share with the group some anger she felt in Time Out recently, but wrote about it on the sheet of paper she filled out when answering the questions. She did not like how the other women in the group seemed elitist when they insisted that the local school was right in expecting pupils to wear expensive uniforms. She identified a justice issue for her in conversation the women had had during sharing time two meetings ago. "Elitism and other forms of privilege anger me," she wrote. She was comfortable showing her anger in other settings where she thought people were bigoted or complacent.

The other woman who chose "anger" used to think that the emotion was purely destructive. Currently, she was experiencing the positive side of anger as an honest expression of one of her feelings. She shared that this new understanding had led to greater confrontation in her marriage, though it also had allowed growth in her relationship with her husband. They were both changing because she was more honest and open about her feelings and thoughts.

One woman experienced "anxiety" as a negative word that she had been thinking about lately. She found herself feeling anxious over what she termed "minor things" but coped by taking time to think things through and asking help from God. She equated her anxiety with her advancing age.

"Failure" was a word that another woman chose to describe her feelings. She was trying to teach her children that effort was the most important aspect of their school reports, yet she saw that she did not allow herself to work under the same standards. She claimed to be learning that trying to "fix" things for others was worth more sometimes than actually being successful at solving others' problems.

One woman chose the two words "control" and "sorry." She felt controlled when someone tried to reduce her capacity for assertiveness. She also thought that children should not be controlled, but taught by example and given praise. Sorry often was used in a way that undermined her. She was accustomed to the phrase "I'm sorry, but . . ." which she defined as "You are wrong and what I say is correct." She thought the word was used too readily without meaning.

The women revealed through their choices of words from the list what issues continued to be important to them. Several women shared life-situations more deeply than usual by talking about contexts in which the words had specific meaning. The words triggered understanding and articulation of their home situations in ways they had not shared with the group previously.

Next, the group turned to the questions they had received

the previous month about fear, depression and anger. When asked what the women feared most in their lives, they answered in a similar manner. Most of the women feared that they would not bring up their children in a satisfactory manner. They worried about any harm coming to them or the children not being able to cope with life. Two women were afraid of loneliness and isolation and one woman added "uselessness." Another woman feared being "stuck" so that she stopped growing spiritually.

The next question asked women how they dealt with these fears. One woman warded off loneliness by "being too busy." Another spent as much time as possible with other people. One member said that she coped with fear about the future regarding the unemployment situation in her family by praying and living one day at a time. Other women hoped that they were guiding their children in the right direction, though one said that she was "overprotective" and panicked easily when the children were in situations where they could be harmed or when they were ill. One woman spent time trying to escape abuse from her husband by avoiding statements that triggered his anger. Finally, one woman shared that she found great value in reading and thinking and she was discovering resources to keep her spiritual life moving.

When the women were asked what depressed them most about their lives, two challenged the use of the word "depressed." They thought of that word in terms of the clinical meaning, and preferred to use a lighter word for "being down" emotionally. One woman found that she "was down" when she

encountered routine and became bored. Lost opportunity also came to mind when she thought of the question. Another member said that the future of her career was out of control because of strikes and rearrangement of the educational system. She felt incompetent when new curriculae were introduced and she didn't cope with them well. She also felt depressed about her appearance. One woman admitted that she was quite depressed about the unemployment situation in her family; she did not see any jobs available for her husband in the near future and could not "see the light at the end of the tunnel." Financial security was what counted at that point, and little else.

One woman felt depressed about living in an abusive situation, and thought that the only way out for her was to leave with the children. The thought of divorce depressed her too. Another was depressed about her lack of freedom when she had two small children to look after, a part-time job and other family commitments. She felt restricted when she wanted to do things for herself.

How each woman handled depression sounded similar. Most indicated that talking about the situation that depressed them was helpful. Several women lived "one day at a time," and tried to find humour in their lives. Two women indicated that prayer helped them to get their situations into perspective. One woman said that she overate when she was depressed, and sometimes "wallowed" in the feeling. Another woman simply worked harder and tried to adopt the attitude that she would have to cope with what she had.

The group then was asked to answer two questions about anger: "what makes me the most angry in life?" and "how do I handle the anger?" Two women claimed that they felt most angry when people were not considerate to each other, and when they saw injustice and prejudice. They handled anger by challenging people who mistreated others and one woman described herself as forceful.

A third woman felt angry about injustice, especially when she believed one of her family members to be experiencing unfair treatment at work. She did not think that she handled anger well; she thought of herself as talking too much and not acting enough, and found herself becoming bitter and sarcastic in certain situations. Another woman said that she felt mistreated at times and felt angry when people did not accept that they were not treating her well. They thought her anger was her problem. She had to be careful not to take her anger out on innocent people, especially the children. Two women felt most angry when they did not feel able to confront their marital situations. One woman regretted that her children did not have the happy childhood that she had. She felt especially angry about her husband's attitude toward women. She handled her anger by playing badminton and walking briskly. Another found that writing in her journal or listening to meditative music by candlelight helped her. She did not think that she was "handling" her anger, but simply trying to cope. She sometimes felt more bitter than angry. Her anger frightened her at times because her asthma worsens when she is angry and she cannot breathe.

I asked the group how depression, fear and anger either help or hurt each woman. Most of the women saw that each of these aspects of their lives was detrimental to their health. One woman wrote on the worksheet that her fear "gnaws" at her. For two women, depression was helpful in two ways. It forced one woman to examine past relationships and another woman to empathise with others who felt depressed. The rest of the women believed that depression kept them "stuck" in the status quo. On the other hand, anger helped them to change the situation that was not satisfactory to them. If they expressed anger in a destructive manner, however, they were aware that they hurt others and themselves.

Only one woman saw "fear" in a positive way. She claimed that when she feared something, she took steps to make sure that the feared situation was prevented from happening. She indicated that she made an effort to work through her fear. The rest of the women found fear to be a root cause for much of their unwillingness to change some things in their lives or face negative memories.

Two women shared their tears with the rest of the group during the evening. They were finding life particularly difficult and yet wanted to let out some of the emotion they were feeling with the group. The sense of "closedness" and power struggle existing in the previous two meetings faded as women were honest about their feelings, though they never addressed the power issue in the group.

Anger, fear and depression are common feelings for many women who are dissatisfied in some ways with their lives.

Anger often is considered to be an emotion unacceptable to express for women. The women in Time Out claimed to have trouble expressing anger in appropriate ways themselves. Some believed that to show anger was wrong. Yet, if women can express these emotions in a "safe place" together, they may find that there is some healing in sharing their feelings. As one woman said, women can find strength through their anger especially; any of the three feelings can lead to change.

Worship: I accumulated seven white candles of all different shapes and sizes for the worship. The women lit the candles with individual tapers, and I explained that each candle was the same colour to represent the group's common experience. However, each candle was different from the others, which symbolised each woman's uniqueness. I read "Magnificat of Now" by Ann Johnson to the women:

My spirit watches for the potent moment, Yahweh,
and in the midst of this celebration
you are a throbbing presence.
All of us are here.
All of us are ready.
Yes, in this time the nearness of your blessing is felt.
"Wine they have not," I said to him.
"What is this to me and thee," he said.
"Not yet has come my hour."
Holy is the work now beginning.
Blessed is the first step.
Blessed are those who, prepared,
have the courage to begin.
Blessed are you, Yahweh, the enabler of deeds
great and simple for these people today.

The fruit of this work offers nourishment to generation
after generation for those who harvest it.

You show us the potency of people with a clear commitment;
you scatter the energies of those who vacillate.

You remove the moderators and the intercessors; you speak
directly to those who speak to you.

You provide answers for those who question; to those who know the answers, you are silent.

You are here now, the Available One, for the work of these times, mindful of your continuing newness . . . according to the traditions of all searching people . . . mindful of the continuing newness of each one of us, we come with open minds to accomplish the work of this day (based on John 2. 1-12).³

I chose the reading about Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana because I saw a connection between his act and the women's work during the February meeting; they discussed three difficult emotions, and some were able to redeem these emotions from their negative effects and turn them into positive activity.

The women closed worship with prayer and silent time, followed by hugs.

Homework: I asked each woman to draw one of the pieces of paper folded together. On each paper was a scripture reading, followed by the phrase "My name is . . .". The women were to look up the biblical characters and try to get "inside" their stories. Then I asked them to write whether they could relate to the character they'd read or not. The woman drew one of the following:

Genesis 34. 1-13

My name is Dinah

Judges 4. 4-16

My name is Deborah

Genesis 3. 1-21

My name is Eve

Matthew 26. 6-13

I am unnamed in the bible, but some call me Mary Magdelene

Luke 24. 1-12

My name is Joanna

Luke 1. 26-56

My name is Mary

The March 1992 meeting opened with sharing time. Only two women were willing to update the group about events in their lives, and one shared her tears about a difficult home

situation. There was uncomfortable silence when she took time to cry without speaking, but I thanked her for her sharing, and she asked us to move on while she composed herself.

The group then turned to the homework assignment, and shared their reactions to the passages they had been reading. Two women found that they could not identify closely with the characters in the passage, though the message came across to them that there were some strong women in the bible, contrary to popular belief. Four women had written their reactions and had given them to me. They are quoted below.

A third woman wrote:
My name is Dinah: I was raped by a man called Shechem. My father Jacob heard of this and took no action against this man as my brothers were still working in the fields. What did that matter? I was angry and hurt. When my brothers came back, they were furious - furious that the people of Israel had been insulted. There was no thought of how I felt. My body had been abused and all they cared about was the insult to our people. Then this man Shechem decided he wanted to marry me. Said he would pay my father whatever he wanted to let him marry me. I wasn't to be considered. I was just regarded as a possession - not a person with her own feelings. How could I possibly want to live with this man who had raped me? All I feel is loathing and disgust for him.

Time hasn't changed the situation for women in all these thousands of years.

The woman who shared her reaction to the passage went on to tell the group how she felt dismissed by men when she expressed her opinion. Further, she had experienced emotional abuse at home and was wary of some men's behaviour toward women.

Another woman wrote:

I am Eve: I am punished for being disobedient - which was

perhaps justified. I am blamed for Adam eating the forbidden fruit which he did of his own choice. That is unfair. Was this the beginning of women's guilt? Why was Adam so ready to shift the blame to Eve? Has it been happening ever since? In the eyes of the (probable) man who wrote this, women seem to be at the root of men's troubles.

The fourth woman opened by saying that she had not known who Joanna was before reading the passage. She found that This woman believed that women are often blamed for men's unhappiness. She also believes that women take responsibility for trying to bring men happiness and feel guilty when they do not. She expressed that this problem occurred not only in religious thinking but in the education field as well.

A third woman wrote this:

I am the woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany: This was a woman who recognised Jesus as the Son of God. She must have been a deep-thinking, strong woman who recognised Jesus as being the Son of God and recognised his preciousness and sense that his time on earth was coming to an end. She must have had a sure, steady faith and belief. This must have required a very steady, strong character even if she were a quiet person as I feel she must have been.

However, she must have known how her use of the very expensive perfume would invite adverse comment and criticism. She does not speak in the passage in Matthew but one senses her strength and her sensitivity and in her own way was also a very precious person. The anointing was really her recognition of the Son of God and also a most sweet farewell.

In reading and re-reading this passage, I find I admire this woman more each time I read it. I admire her strength of character and the fact that she is not deflected from her purpose. I admire her sensitivity and gentleness and insight into the uncertainty and loneliness that Jesus must have felt knowing what his immediate future was.

The woman did not offer any comment after she read her understanding of the passage. I asked if anything appealed to her especially about the character or reminded her of her

own life. She said that she wanted to have the same kind of sense of purpose that the woman who anointed Jesus seemed to have.

The fourth woman opened by saying that she had not known who Joanna was before reading the passage. She found that based on some of her own experiences of God, she could relate to the wonder Joanna must have felt at the empty tomb. She shared her writing with the group:

I am Joanna: We set out early for the tomb with heavy hearts, deep in grief; hurt and angry about what they had done to Jesus. At least we can attend to the body with love and care. As we approach it becomes clear the stone is gone - and the body? Gone! But how? Where? Someone has moved the stone? Stolen the body? I feel confused, frightened, angry - not even this is going right. Everything is falling apart. Then they speak to us - these men? Angels? I don't know - they are saying we are looking in the wrong place. You don't find the living among the dead. Jesus has risen. It all whirls inside my head - Jesus alive? Can't be - could it be? Stop! Try to think! I sense the growing excitement inside me - this is what he had been talking about in Galilee - our trust was rightly placed - once more the gut feelings are right!

The euphoria grows and as we hug each other, the enormity of this discovery begins to dawn - what a privilege to be chosen to tell this news - in his death he has affirmed me and my friends, just as he has done so many, many women during his ministry. He believes in me as I believe in him - he knows we have something to offer to the world. I must now show by my life and faith that he did not die in vain. What a gift to be given. We must go now and tell the others - I doubt if the men will believe us - I bet at least some will want to see for themselves, rather than take our word - typical! But somehow their disbelief doesn't seem to matter so much - I know this feels right within me. Please, Jesus, help me find the strength to undertake the task you have entrusted to me.

Each woman expressed an emotional reaction to the women about whom they had thought or written. Most could relate the women to themselves, though two found the situations in

the bible not helpful to their own. The exercise of biblical study interested them, however, and they expressed a desire to continue to find new characters and new interpretations of women in the biblical story and history. Most of the passages had provided a sense of the strength of women, or the misunderstanding and mistreatment of women. Group members found that the bible was much more subjective in its treatment of women than they first thought.

The women of Time Out met in April to discuss the future of the group more concretely than they had in past meetings. The women also spent time creating a worship service together for the final meeting in June, before the facilitator left. There was much debate about whether the group should remain exclusive or invite others to participate. Two women continued to believe that exclusivity went against the principles of feminism. Two women did not want to be exclusive, but did not believe that they could share inner thoughts and feelings with any new members. Two had little difficulty with the group remaining closed. They also needed to address the issue that they no longer had permission from the senior pastor to meet at the church as an exclusive women's group once the research section of the meetings was complete. They agreed to continue meeting initially without inviting new members, to "see how it works." However, after the meeting, two women expressed their personal concern to me that they did not know if they could condone an exclusive group when they had learned what harm exclusivity had done to them. I decided that the discussion was not yet closed and

the women would need to continue to address the issue at the next meeting.

The June meeting of Time Out involved worshipping together after clarifying each woman's position about what the future of the group looked like. The evening's discussion began where the last meeting had ended. Two women were more open about their discomfort about being exclusive after the research stopped. One woman believed that it was time for all the women to move on to something different. However, the group agreed to meet in each other's houses for the next few months on a trial basis. One woman refused to express any opinion within the group, but had shared anger with me that the group was not allowed to meet in the church as long as it was exclusive.

The order of service the women prepared for the evening was typed out as follows:

Ms: Time, if only I had time,
I'm sure my life would rhyme for you.
Every whisper of your voice
Would make my life rejoice for you.
As your will would fill my mind,
All smaller thoughts
Would soon be left behind
For you, my Lord.

F: 'Time, oh yes, you have time,
For all the time is mine,' says God;
'As rhythm, as is dance
And all that hearts and hands applaud
You are absolutely free
To and delay,
To give your Yes to me
My child, my child.'

Ms: Yes, oh help me to say Yes
With all that I possess, my Lord;
With my dreams and with my praise

TIME OUT WORSHIP - 20 MAY 1992

OPENING READING: (Ja)

Your Presence Lord

SONG: Take You Lord are in the world
Your presence fills it
Take Your presence is Hope
Take my friends around
Here You Lord are in this place
Your presence fills it
Your presence is Hope
Take the time to call my name,
Take You Lord are in my life
Who Your presence fills it
All Your presence is hope
Take You Lord are in my heart
Take Your presence fills it
Let Your presence is Hope.
All I can't forget

REFLECTIVE READING: Time

F: Time, if only I had time,
I'm sure my life would mime for you.
All my energy and love
I'd summon up and move for you.
As your word would let me know,
I'd stop to listen,
Ponder and to grow
For you, my Lord.

PRAYER: M: Time, if only I had time,
I'm sure my life would rhyme for you.
Leader: Let Every whisper of your voice
integrity and b Would make my life rejoice for you.
minds: As your will would fill my mind,
All smaller thoughts
Response: We Would soon be left behind
For you, my Lord.

Leader: Let us acknowledge each other, each
strain of struggle F: 'Time, oh yes, you have time,
'For all the time is mine,' says God,
Response: We 'As rhythm, as is dance
And all that hearts and hands applaud.
Leader: Let You are absolutely free
boldness of spirit To end delay,
To give your Yes to me
Response: We My child, my child.'

Leader: M: Yes, oh help me to say Yes
irony of circumstance With all that I possess, my Lord:
With my dreams and with my praise

Response: We And all my secret ways, my Lord.
Let you life and mine be one

Leader: Let And my obedience
knowing that as Offered up to none
God, with God a But you my Lord, my Lord.

Response: We stand together

SONG: Take this moment

COMMUNAL Take this moment, sign and space;
prayers Take my friends around;
Here among us make the place
Where your love is found.

SCRIPTURE READING 13-10 (R)

RESPONSE Take the time to call my name,
Take the time to mend
Who I am and what I've been,
All I've failed to tend.

Leader: Be still, my God

RESPONSE Take the tiredness of my days,
Take my past regret,
Letting your forgiveness touch
All I can't forget.

Leader: Take the little child in me,
Scared of growing old;
Help her here to find her worth
Made in Christ's own mould.

RESPONSE Take my talents, take my skills,
Take what's left to be;
Let my life be yours, and yet,
Let it still be me.

RESPONSE Let my life be yours, and yet,
Let it still be me.

PRAYER: We stand together (A)

Leader: Let us affirm the goodness in each other, the
integrity and beauty of our bodies, the insights of our
minds.

Response: We stand together

Response: And then we will be able to stand.

Leader: Let us acknowledge the pain in each other, the
strain of struggle, the sorrow of defeat and death.

Response: We stand together

Leader: Let us uphold the daring in each other; the
boldness of spirit, the resoluteness of action.

Response: We stand together

Leader: Let us esteem laughter and joy in each other; the
irony of circumstances, the delight of relationships.

Leader: When he came down with his disciples, he came

Response: We stand together

Leader: Let us go forth empowered from this space and time knowing that as we bless each other, so we are blessed in God, with God and by God.

Response: We stand together

COMMUNAL PRAYER: (Everyone contributes her thoughts and prayers)

SCRIPTURE READING: Sirach 51. 13-30 (R)

RESPONSIVE READING: Be still and know (Je)

Leader: Be still and know that I am God

Response: And there is none beside me.

Be still and know that I am God,
And there is none beside me.

Leader: The greatest love a person can have for her friends is to give her life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants, because a servant does not know what her master is doing. But I have told you everything I heard from God . . . so I call you my friends.

Response: And there is none beside me.

Be still and know that I am God,
And there is none beside me.

Leader: If you obey my commands, you will know my love, just as I have obeyed Yahweh's commands, and know this love. And my command is simply that you love each other as I have loved you. I chose you, and I have appointed you to go and bear much fruit -- the kind that will last. But remember, I chose you -- you did not choose me.

Response: And there is none beside me.

Be still and know that I am God,
And there is none beside me.

Leader: Those who love their own life will lose it. Those who do not love their own life in this world will keep it forever. Those who want to serve me must follow me. Whoever follows me I will never turn away.

Response: And there is none beside me.

Be still and know that I am God,
And there is none beside me.

Leader: When he came down to earth at Bethlehem, he came

down, alone. When he ran away from his parents, he ran away,
alone. When he was tempted in the desert, he was tempted,
alone. When he was brought before Pilate, he was brought,
alone. When he was crucified and buried, he rose again,
alone. For there none better than him, none above him, none
beside him, Be still and know that I am God.

Response: And there is none beside me.
Be still and know that I am God,
And there is none beside me.

COMMUNION TOGETHER

OPENING PRAYER: (L)

PRAYER SAID TOGETHER: The Real Presence

Lord be with me in the breaking of the bread
Lord bless my heart, my hands, my head
Lord be with me offering the wine
Lord bless body and soul, they are thine

Lord present in the wine and bread
Stay with me Lord when I am fed
Bless the way by which I go
Guide me in this world below

Lord thou art there in bread and wine
Around my life may thou entwine
Bless O Lord the life I lead
From sin and stain keep me freed

Thy Presence come between me
and all things evil
Thy Presence come between me
and all things vile
Thy Presence come between me
and all things of guile
Thy Presence come between me
and all things that defile
Keep me O Lord as the apple of thine eye
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.

SHARING THE BREAD AND WINE

QUIET TIME - TAIZE MUSIC

BLESSINGS

The Pilgrim's Aiding (M)

God be with thee in every pass,
Jesus be with thee on every hill,

Spirit be with thee on every stream,
Headland and ridge and lawn;

Each sea and land, each moor and meadow,
Each lying down, each rising up,
In the trough of the waves, on the crest of the billows,
Each step of the journey thou goest.

The Cross of Christ

The Cross of Christ
Upon your brow
The Cross of Christ
Protect you now

The Cross of Christ
Upon your mind
The Cross of Christ
Make you kind

The Cross of Christ
Upon your head
The Cross of Christ
Save from dread

The Cross of Christ
Upon your face
The Cross of Christ
Give you grace

The Cross of Christ
Upon your heart
The Cross of Christ
Set you apart

The Cross of Christ
Upon your soul
The Cross of Christ
Keep you whole.

SONG: Shalom (sung three times)

Shalom to you now, shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies bless you, my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom, Christ be your shalom.⁴

further group work within the church, focusing on men, and
The women hugged and cried and said good-bye after the
worship. There was a feeling of sadness throughout the
sharing in the liturgy, but the emotion was not expressed
until worship had ended. I told the members that they had a
future to look to, and that I would be in touch.

Synopsis

Sharing in Time Out did not have the quality it had had
before the winter of 1991. Two members had withdrawn
emotionally from the group, one behaving passive aggressively
toward three others in the past few months. As the women
began to sense control issues developing within the group,
the quality of emotional sharing decreased and more
intellectual discussion arose. However, the women continued
to be able to celebrate their time together, and were
invested in their various friendships throughout the group.
Two women continued to struggle with self-esteem issues and
others seemed to be resting from internal work for the time
being. For two, grief work was the most important element in
their emotional lives at the time of worship in the last
meeting; for them, there did not seem to be much space for
anything else then.

Chapter eleven develops the analysis of the group work with
women in Time Out. It combines the historical, theological
and psychological issues outlined in the first part of this
research with the work and insights Time Out members
introduced themselves. The analysis leads to a call for

further group work within the church, focusing on men, and

ENDNOTES

finally the development of koinonia through this work.

1. McMillan, Joyce. "It is Time to Treasure the Value of the Gift of Love," *Episcopalist* at Sunday, August 13, 1991. p. 8.

2. Friedman, Edwin. *Kalender's Palace*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1996. pp. 119-132.

3. Johnson, Ann. *Myriad of Miracles: Women of Faith and Wisdom*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1988. pp. 46-49.

4. Adam, David. *The Edge of Glory*. London: SPCK/Triangle Books, 1985. Adam, David. *Edges and Seasons*. London: SPCK/Triangle Books, 1999. Bell, John L. and Graham Maule. *Love from Below*. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1989. Bell, John L. and Graham Maule. *Legacy of Apathy*. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1990. Bell, Esther de, editor. *The Celtic Vision*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1988.

ENDNOTES: Challenging Patriarchy

1. McMillan, Joyce. "It's Time to Treasure the Value of the Gift of Love," Scotland on Sunday. August 18, 1991. p. 8.
2. Friedman, Edwin. Friedman's Fables. New York: The Guilford Press, 1990. pp. 129-132.
3. Johnson, Ann. Miryam of Nazareth: Woman of Strength and Wisdom. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1988. pp. 88-89.
4. Adam, David. The Edge of Glory. London: SPCK/Triangle Books, 1985. Adam, David. Tides and Seasons. London: SPCK/Triangle Books, 1989. Bell, John L. and Graham Maule. Love from Below. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1989. Bell, John L. and Graham Maule. Enemy of Apathy. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1990. Waal, Esther de, editor. The Celtic Vision. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1988.

clearer understanding of the significance of the issues, some analysis must occur in each field. This chapter covers topics women discussed in their work, as well as dynamics that the facilitator observed during the course of the meetings together. The issues explored here will develop a foundation for looking at contributions and corrections to the historical, theological and sociological assumptions found in the wider church in the next two chapters.

Historical and Theological Issues

The most significant historical and theological issues that arose in group work were related to women's self-identity. Without explicitly discussing images of Mary as virgin, mother, saint, seductress and mother, the women in time out alluded to all of these roles within group discussions throughout the two years. The women's sexuality was a constant theme that was wrapped up in all five images. In the group context, no woman talked about her sexuality in terms of sharing a life

PART III: Challenging Patriarchy

CHAPTER ELEVEN: SIGNIFICANT ISSUES ARISING IN GROUP WORK

Introduction

Group work with women over a long period of time raises personal, historical, theological and psychological issues, often woven together in ways that cannot be totally separated. To analyse the issues in categories sets up a compartmentalised view of women's make-up; however, to gain a clearer understanding of the significance of the issues, some analysis must occur in each field. This chapter covers topics women discussed in Time Out, as well as dynamics that the facilitator observed during the course of the meetings together. The issues arising here will develop a foundation for looking at contributions and corrections to the historical, theological and psychological assumptions found in the wider church in the next three chapters.

Historical and Theological Issues

The most significant historical and theological issues that arose in group work were related to women's self-images. Without explicitly discussing images such as virgin, martyr, saint, seductress and mother, the women in Time Out alluded to all of these roles within group discussion throughout the two years. The women's sexuality and attitude toward others was wrapped up in all five images. In the group context, no woman talked about her sexuality in terms of sharing with a

partner, but all women shared their feelings about their bodies and their understanding of what they would be comfortable with in terms of looks. The women expressed concern that their daughters developed a healthy attitude toward their own bodies and sexuality; they acknowledged that they felt like "objects" to men many times. No woman felt "evil" because of being female, but one woman understood that women had been labelled negatively for being attractive to men. She claimed that popular thinking led people to believe that women brought about men's moral demise by being sexually tempting. The image of woman as "seductive witch," though not specifically stated, arose when the group began to talk about sexuality and temptation.

The image of woman as primarily reproductive vessel was never far away in group discussion. Motherhood was seen as a "calling" for most women in the group. Several shared that they had not really thought about not having children once they were married; motherhood had not been optional in their minds. One woman claimed that men were jealous of women's capacity to conceive, carry and give birth to children. There seemed to be an underlying assumption in some women's minds that women were responsible for having children to continue the family lineage and also to continue the human race, as long as their lifestyle could support children.

Women's ability to give birth in addition to issues of temptation have been a concern of the church for centuries. Until the 20th century, women had to undergo cleansing rites after they had given birth before they could take communion;

indeed, some churches still practise the "churching" (cleansing) of women after they give birth. However, to be married and not to give birth labelled a woman "barren" or even "frigid;" in other words, she was unable to fulfil her duty to her husband and husband's family, because something was supposedly wrong with her. On the other hand, to be sexually active outwith marriage immediately labelled a woman as evil seductress, tempting innocent men and corrupting the morally upright. To bear children without being married led to burning women during witch hunts, and still holds a negative stigma of immorality and irresponsibility today.

For women in the group, virginity also was an important aspect of sexuality, where the female was considered violated if not virginal and pure. Some women believed that marriage was the only proper place for sex, while others hoped that any sexual encounter would involve a loving, though not necessarily marital, relationship. Talking about the issue of sexuality was most comfortable for group members when they talked in terms of dealing with their daughters' attitudes. The women were willing to talk about personal body image and sexuality in a limited way, but not deeply. Only one woman said that she was working to be comfortable with how she looked at the time, but shied away from talking about sexuality in personal terms. I was aware that women talked with each other about their sex lives outside of the group, but the atmosphere may not have seemed safe enough during gatherings.

For the women in the group, martyrdom was the most

significant of the five faces of women discussed in chapter two. Martyrdom combined with sainthood and motherhood, though not spelled out as such, were often linked. "The children need to come first," was a common phrase for Time Out women. Martyrdom accompanied motherhood especially, but also came into play with certain husbands and through work in the church in some cases. In other words, others always needed to come first for two women, or they did not feel comfortable with themselves. Sainthood was combined with motherhood and martyrdom when women demanded perfection from themselves in their service to family and friends. The suffering servant image often was positively reinforced by group members as it has been through Christian church history for women. Each woman had trouble saying "no" to children when they demanded her time at inconvenient moments. Sacrificing her own time seemed much more appropriate than having to deal with the guilt of saying no to a child or husband in need. One woman revealed that her self-esteem depended on others acknowledging her indispensable self-sacrificing on their behalf. This issue continued to be problematic for her as the group met throughout two years. The martyred or Suffering Servant image is reinforced in Christian theology as the true path for Christians, based on Mark 10.38 and Philippians 2.1-18. However, this theological outlook is problematic for women. Christ sacrificed himself so that all people might be "saved,"¹ and the church has taught human beings to follow that example. Women have become very good at sacrificing their lives for the lives of

others. This message has been taken so literally that there is no sense of self left in many women. The Time Out group struggled with this concept. They had repeated debates about when they were being "selfish", and when attending to their own needs was not so much being selfish as building self-esteem.

Women often do not make a conscious decision to sacrifice themselves for their families and those in need. They simply do it because that is what they are taught is required of them. Again, the bible reinforces this message for them in 1 Peter 2. 19-21, 1 Peter 3.1. The difference for women and men is that women almost automatically take on suffering servant roles, while men can make an active choice whether to be servants. Women have an inherent status of servanthood in a patriarchal system; men can serve without the same role being assigned to them.

Without a feminist hermeneutic or an understanding of cultural household codes of the early church times, women can easily take suffering servant passages in the bible literally and develop lifestyles that render them passive and guilty without making room for their own growth and health. Time Out members began to fight this tendency through discussion, but some still could not eliminate feelings of guilt and selfishness when they spent time doing what they wanted to do or took space for themselves.

Guilt too, is a theological issue. Many preachers remind congregations of their inherent guilt in everything that they do; this life is supposed to be spent trying to avoid making

The women in *Time Out* did not equate their feelings of the guilty human nature worse than it already is. Women absorb this kind of thinking readily. With history behind them telling them that they are to blame for the state of humankind, because they were the reason for evil coming into the world,² women find that it is easy to absorb the blame for the behaviour of all people close to them in their lives. They unwittingly have combined the theology of suffering with the theology of sin and guilt developed by the church. Two atonement theories characterise this combined theology.³ The Juridical atonement theory of the crucifixion outlines the understanding that Christ suffered, sacrificing himself to propitiate an angry God, and expiate human beings from their sin. The Exemplary theory of atonement shows Christ as the supreme example of self-sacrifice to bring about God's love.⁴ Both these and other theories try and show how vital "to" sacrifice is to the Christian who wishes to bring about God's favour and express love for others. Women especially have adopted this thinking and act it out in their family lives and sometimes in their working relationships and with their friends. Valerie Saiving, in her survey of twentieth-century theologians states that:

Love, according to these theologians, is completely self-giving, taking no thought of its own interests but seeking only the good of the other. Love makes no value judgments concerning the other's worth; it demands neither merit in the other nor recompense for itself, but gives freely, fully, and without calculation. Love is unconditional forgiveness; concerning the one to whom it is given, it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.⁵

The women in Time Out did not equate their feelings of guilt and need for self-sacrifice to be "good" mothers directly with this biblical and theological background. They saw their feelings more as a result of upbringing and societal expectations. However, behind these expectations and their upbringing lies the patriarchal Christian focus of the western church. Ephesians 5. 22-24 tells wives to be subject to their husbands. Genesis 3.16 tells women that husbands will rule over them. These passages may never be read in the pulpit where the women in Time Out attend church, but they are referred to or lived out by those people who are invested in keeping the dominant-subordinate sex positions as they are, and have used the church's teaching to do so. Mary Daly writes about the sacrificial love in terms of scapegoat theology:

The qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are also those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc. Since these are the qualities idealized in Jesus "who died for our sins," his functioning as a model reinforces the scapegoat syndrome for women. Given the victimized situation of the female in sexist society, these "virtues" are hardly the qualities that women should be encouraged to have.⁶

For women, the issues of self-sacrifice and guilt are very significant. For several women in Time Out to give themselves permission to be their own persons instead of servants for others, they need to look at what "selfishness" means in the terms grappling with their own view of self. Sue Dunfee, in a debate with Reinhold Niebuhr over the sin of pride, claims that women do not encounter this sin in the way

that men do. others' expectations.

Another theological issue that arose in the group was the Woman needs to assert that human sinfulness is not just the sin of pride, but is also the sin of hiding; that the God who judges human pride must also judge human hiding and passivity, not by demanding a sacrifice of the self, but by becoming the forgiven self to affirm her full humanity through grasping and claiming her call to freedom . . .

To confess her sin of hiding is a deeply threatening thing for any woman to do. We have believed for so long that femininity and assertiveness cannot be held together, that we persist in hiding behind husband/fathers/children, bosses, and in the busyness of being somebody's "something" rather than in the demanding task of becoming who we are.

The process of building community within the presence of God

The women in Time Out did not distinguish between their desire to do things for others from a motive of guilt instead of love. The word "love" did not come up much in terms of family relationships. The focus remained on how to rid themselves of unhealthy attitudes and find self-esteem or learn to love themselves. However, there was a sense that women assumed that love was present in most of their family relationships, but responsibility to perform a certain role was a larger issue for them. this kind of anger was not

Christian love may become translated into Christian duty and obligation for women; these concepts are not separated in theological teaching. Thus, it is important for women to look at their motives for functioning the way they do. The questions becomes: is women's behaviour based on choice stemming from love for others, or is it based on a sense of having no choice but to fulfil the roles expected of them. Members of Time Out struggled with this issue without naming it precisely throughout their meetings. It was clear, however, that most of the women felt that they had no choice

but to fulfil others' expectations.

Another theological issue that arose in the group was the sense of establishing close-knit relationships and open sharing of joys and concerns. The group had shared bread together in December 1990, as a symbol of their close community. They also had spent much time working together to create worship, develop relationship, discover their own gifts and talents, and encounter God in more personal ways. The process of building community within the presence of God was described by one woman as a feeling that the group was like the disciples gathered together during meetings.

As the group gained confidence in the work that members were doing together, the women began to express righteous anger at the injustices they were encountering. Communal anger was less threatening than individual expressions of anger, because it reinforced the groups's solidarity. The women saw communal anger as righteous anger and struggled with the understanding that this kind of anger was not "wrong," as they put it. One woman thought that her anger must be wrong, because it seemed so destructive and negative. However, when she heard that Jesus had expressed righteous anger with the money-changers in the temple, she felt justified. The group discussed the difference between righteous and destructive anger. To three, righteous anger was a response to injustice and oppression and could lead to action toward alleviating the source of injustice. The remaining women were not quite sure whether anger could be justified if it involved violence. The topic became a

theological issue for them in terms of God's anger and judgment. God's anger could be justified because human beings deserved it, said one woman, but human anger led only to destruction because human beings did not know how to use it wisely. Six women believed that the key to healthy anger was whether someone was being mistreated and whether the angry reaction was handled appropriately. To them, destructive anger was a dismissal of the source or the "real issue" and could lead to depression, if turned inward. The group did not name their anger in most of the meetings - several members simply expressed it through their emotive speaking. However, the group found a place for righteous anger as part of their community building, which helped them to move out of the suffering servant role, and into the journey toward freedom.

As a result of this journey, the women wished to share their community by reaching out and being "Fishers of Women."⁸ They began to adopt the role of discipleship once again by using that phrase, and opened the possibility for new models of reaching out to others and interacting in a healthy manner.

celebrating their journey together. The women also began to think of women outside the group.

Issues arising in Worship

The progression of worship throughout the time that the group met as a cohesive unit was a major factor in bringing the members closer together. Discussion time led to consciousness-raising on mostly an intellectual level. Worship time led to consciousness-raising through emotion for

the most part. The women shared as they looked at their experiences of worship over time that, for them, God was becoming an active Being in their lives instead of the distant ecclesiastical judge with whom many of them had grown up imagining. They all claimed that their faith became deeper the more they worshipped together, and that worship reinforced the new concepts and increasing freedom they felt through group work.

Worship which the women created together always had a communal element in it. Week-by-week, worship developed into a more intimate act. Discussion alone could not have fostered the closeness that group members claimed to feel when they centred themselves on silence and the presence of God. The spiritual element of time together deepened bonds that discussions had introduced, according to all the women. The first service talked about the importance of being a group together and the discoveries women had made about what they had in common. The worship times during each session built on the theme of the evening, but also challenged women to think about their internal issues.

The second service they planned together focused on celebrating their journey together. The women also began to look beyond themselves and think of women outwith Time Out. Worship after group sharing began to encompass social issues as well as personal issues.

Because some women were beginning to talk about differences amongst them, worship emphasised each woman's uniqueness in February 1992. The group had had little biblical exposure to

women's stories, so biblical women were included in worship at that time. Some women realised that they had common experience with these women of 2000 or more years ago. The third service asked questions of the future, after acknowledging how much learning and sharing had occurred over two years. It also marked closure for the group as it stood.

When the women began to talk about worship and its significance to them, they all agreed that it was a quiet time, providing space that they needed. Worship during meetings up to the first time the women intentionally created a service together, was led by the facilitator. The women had difficulty explaining what was so important to them about the worship experience; however, they each found the most peace in the symbol of the candle. They were able to say that worship was the element that drew them closer than they had been with other women in group contexts.

The movement of the group identity became very evident when comparing the first worship service the women planned together to the second. The first service, created in January 1991, signified a culmination of what the women had discovered about themselves and each other since the previous June. The theme was based on their recognition of experiences and feelings they had in common. Group members intentionally emphasised the word "us" in the candle liturgy, combining all their thoughts so that each phrase spoke for all of them. Their focus during the creation of worship was on the support they felt within the group. It was clear when they described the creative process that no woman wanted to

stand out from the others during worship. They were celebrating their commonality, because they had spent much of their lives feeling isolated in their experiences. Two women seemed to be clutching at being just like others in the group because it gave them a sense of security; binding everyone together in words through liturgy felt like a celebration of this sameness and in two women's minds, supposed that she was understanding of each other.

By June 1991, several women were beginning to recognise that being close did not mean being the same. All the women expressed that they believed they were looking inward too much and wanted to focus outside themselves more in the group discussion context. In August, the act of worship after discussion time consisted of seeing a female figurine from different angles at different times. The symbolism of seeing one figure from different angles was meant to reflect how women could feel unified in one body while feeling differentiated at the same time.

A subtle change in group dynamic played out in the second worship service the women created in October 1991, without the facilitator. First, there was a greater emphasis on naming God in the service. The women seemed more aware of God's presence and two women had spoken about their desire to include God's name more than in the last worship experience they had developed. Acknowledging God verbally was important to them. For them, naming God clarified the foundation upon which worship was based.

Second, different women took ownership of particular

aspects of the worship. Instead of trying to make all of the liturgy fit everyone, the women were more comfortable expressing their own parts. They were able to take individual responsibility while working in a group context.

Third, the material used in the liturgy had been taken from resource books; there was very little original writing done for this worship event. However, one woman said that she was very comfortable with not having to be original, as long as the material said accurately what she was feeling and thinking. She thought it was appropriate to take what she liked from resource books and to leave the rest. Two women disagreed. One woman indicated that she did not feel as if she had achieved what they were supposed to on a creative level when she took things from a book. However, she had been pleased with the worship and found it meaningful.

The reactions to working out how worship would occur showed that the women were thinking more independently and contributing individually to their creative process as a group. The worship resources used showed a greater variety than the previous service; women also were interested in exploring the apocrypha, which they were finding helpful in terms of expressing their faith and friendship. As the women began to recognise their differences, they were able to begin to make claims for what they wanted in their worship, without feeling threatened. Two women welcomed diverse contributions to worship; the rest were less sure. Worship needed to be safe and comforting to them instead of disturbing and challenging.

During the months that the women worshipped together, they did at one point begin to assign certain labels and preparatory tasks to each other. One woman was teased because she wanted to include a significant amount of scripture in the worship. She also wanted the group to name God specifically each time members worshipped together. Another woman agreed with her, but the majority of the group teased her about being the "bible woman." Differences in theological approach to worship were analysed in the group context. Three women wanted a scriptural emphasis for most worship and four did not see the need, as long as members were worshipping in a Christian manner. This discussion often took a central place when the women reviewed their creative process, and ended in frustrated silence, or a joke and change of subject. The women respected each other's opinions but never engaged in debate. It was clear however, that they had different approaches to meaningful worship. Nevertheless, the women were successful at respecting these differences even if they did not agree, and most members were quick to compromise. Two simply remained silent during discussion and did not express their opinions more than once. For them, scripture did not need to be central.

Three women were comfortable with the image of God as female. The others tolerated this image, but preferred God to be male, and more specifically, "Father." Those who preferred the father-figure, attributed the desire to describe God as a female image (often, but not exclusively "Mother") as a reaction to a bad experience with one's own

father. However, they were not opposed to the image if other women were more comfortable with it. A female image of God was empowering for three women; as they thought about women becoming empowered, a female image became one of strength and comfort to them, sometimes more so than a male image. The compromise in the liturgies where God was mentioned showed that the women were sensitive to each other's images, but did not employ either explicit male or female roles for God. The struggle over image in the group, though not overt, led to an attempt at neutrality instead of inclusive use of female and male names for God.

The third worship service was planned with the facilitator present. There was virtually no original material in the order of service, with the exception of a spontaneous prayer by myself. The liturgy used the first-person singular pronoun in the opening section, followed by a declaration of solidarity in the plural, "We Stand Together." There was a feeling of grief expressed during the preparation of the liturgy, because Time Out was breaking up as the facilitator moved away. The group would reconnect in a new way after the facilitator left, but loss of one member changed the dynamic of the group. The worship was meant to acknowledge connection, individuality and grief at the same time. There were also three significant differences between the third service and the first two. First, the women decided that they would sing together despite several members being uncomfortable with the quality of their singing voices. The first hymn had deep meaning for one woman, and she wished to

share it in solidarity in the group context. The "Shalom" at the end of the service was a blessing for the group and for the facilitator who was moving away. All the women shed tears during the final singing. Singing became an important part of the service for most women; it seemed to bring out emotion that the words of the liturgy did not.

Second, the women sat on the floor in the west chancel area of the sanctuary, with a candle in the middle. Sitting on the floor made the setting less formal and moving the body easier, though one woman was suffering from back pain. The body was freer to express itself in terms of body language of comfort or discomfort with liturgy, singing or silence.

Third, the group celebrated communion together as an act of remembrance of Christ's presence, and also as a way to symbolise solidarity and community. Members had requested communion, knowing that they were moved during church services on Sundays by sharing the eucharist. The idea was to share bread and wine, bringing Christ amongst women who had struggled to find common ground together and also to differentiate their personalities while retaining community. The issues arising in the group were focused in worshipful experience, where the women established community with God in the midst of them.

Psychological Issues

The historical elements and the sharing through worship in Time Out link directly with psychological issues that arose in the group. Group members repeatedly addressed their own

inner conflict about taking time for and being good to themselves versus being selfish. For some, renewing themselves and doing the things that they wanted to do became easier over the two years. For others, the issue of self-sacrifice remained a struggle; if they were not functioning for others, they thought of themselves as selfish. Two women continued to sacrifice almost all of their personal time for family because they had difficulty changing behaviour or belief that this sacrifice was the proper role for women. However, the fact that they continued to attend group meetings despite significant opposition from their husbands showed that they were invested in finding some time for friends and for potential healing.

Self-esteem was another issue important to women. Self-esteem directly linked with a woman's ability to claim time for herself even when functioning in an overwhelmingly busy schedule. Four women claimed that their assertiveness had increased since they had shared common experience within the group. As members reinforced the validity of each woman's feelings, women discovered that they were more able to be assertive with family members and business people. There was no assertiveness training per se in the group context; the ability to assert oneself seemed to stem from growing self-esteem. When women found their self-esteem increasing, they were better able to acknowledge any sexism they encountered in family and work life. They also began to act as if they had power over their own lives, instead of waiting for husbands and children to define their roles.

The significant issue of mothers' concern for their daughters in a world where the mothers themselves have felt pressure to conform to external expectations cannot be underestimated in Time Out's work. A commitment to bringing up children within a feminist framework was difficult for mothers, especially when girls were encouraged to be more passive and less assertive than boys in many subliminal messages on television, in magazines and at school. School uniforms restricted girls' movements; skirts and dresses restrained their ability to jump, run and climb as the boys did, especially when girls became more aware of their bodies and male reactions to them. Women claimed that friends who were not aware of the subtle sexual stereotyping and its negative consequences may reinforce traditional attitudes. Moira Walker describes in her book, Women in Therapy and Counselling, when her own daughter was subjected to unintentional sexism.

When my own daughter was two, she was fearlessly and happily dangling from the top of a large climbing frame, enjoying herself immensely. In tone of admiration another mother said: 'She should have been born a boy, that one'. A third mother, apparently mistakenly interpreting my lack of intervention in terms of my advanced pregnancy, removed my indignant daughter 'in case she fell', leaving her own, younger and rather less robust son to play uninterrupted.⁹

The influence of these kinds of attitudes serve to reinforce the myth that girls are "naturally" more passive than boys and give the girls the message that this passivity is basis of good behaviour for females.

Nancy Chodorow outlines the "double identification process"

that girls and their mothers encounter. Mothers do not separate themselves from daughters as they do from sons; in addition to this lack of separation, there is the ever-present stereotype that girls are passive. As a result, it becomes very difficult for women to allow their small daughters independence and a separate identity. The daughter is caught in a dilemma too. She needs to be like her mother to retain her image of female identity, but she must also leave her mother to become an individual who makes her own decisions and finds her own self-esteem.¹⁰

Both mothers and daughters receive the same messages about sexuality today as they have in the past, although advertising is more explicit today, and there is a perception that it is easier to discuss sex because it is easier to talk about contraception for females. Girls and women still are constantly surrounded by images of women being portrayed as objects. John Berger describes the situation:

Men act and women appear [author's emphasis]. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women, but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.¹¹

The February 1992 meeting opened up the issues of depression, anger and fear. All three feelings were present to some degree in most of the women's lives. Two members seemed very depressed over the two years of meeting together because of difficult living conditions. Others became

depressed but were able to work through it eventually. Two Time Out members objected to the term "depression" and claimed that no one in the group was truly depressed. They were asserting that no one had a so-called clinical case of depression and needed to be hospitalised. These two women were not willing to use the term in a more general sense; they also were women who were not willing to share much about their home lives during sharing time. There was a clear sense of personal denial occurring in one woman's situation, but no one challenged her defensiveness about the word "depression."

There are several psychological reasons why women become depressed and cannot seem to shake the feeling. Because women often identify themselves solely in terms of support systems for others (partner, mother, daughter taking care of elderly parents), when the source of their care ceases to exist through death, divorce, moving away from home, or whatever reason, part of a woman's sense of identity is lost too. Walker believes that work outside of the home protects against depression in some ways because it gives women some financial independence and status, but more importantly gives them another source of validity. Their sense of self is not solely tied up in responsibility for another person or other people.

Because women are more focused upon sharing relationships than men in general, they also tend to make greater commitments to relationships. They also take on greater responsibilities in relationships and are quick to blame

themselves if friction or separation or both occur. Women who are mothers mostly take responsibility for children when they lose their partners, and feel the guilt of making life complicated for their children when "she could have tried harder or changed" to solve problems with a partner.

Studies by Gove¹² and Gove and Tudor¹³ look at the impact marriage has on many women. The stresses and expectations of women in marriage contradict the false sense of security and protection that most women sought through marrying in the first place. In fact, marriage, according to these studies, benefitted men by protecting them emotionally and providing a "safe place" from the outside work world.

Children too can be another factor in women's depression. However much mothers love their children, it is difficult to see how they can value the job of bringing them up when many end up isolated, alone, devalued and unsupported. Women are told that they are doing a valuable job when they become mothers, but there is little economic or social support other than what the mother can find for herself. Motherhood is idealised, but given minimal social provision; often women who are mothers find themselves cut off from other adult company, outside interests and opportunities, and relevant stimulation.

For many women, the daily routine of caring for children, participating in a relationship with a partner, looking after the home with minimal help and working outside the home is highly stressful. In addition to these demands that women feel are necessary for them to fulfil, any experience of loss

can trigger depression. If women give up jobs when they have children, they lose social and financial status. Loss of parents affects both men and women, but if women have been primary care-takers of elderly parents, the loss may be felt more deeply. When children grow through stages of development and schooling and eventually leave home, again the primary care-taker feels the loss most keenly. Further, if women follow partners who are moving for employment reasons, they leave their support system of friends and home behind. Isolation becomes acute in a new living situation. A sense of powerlessness and being out of control can lead to depression in times of loss if the woman cannot find support that allows her to express and work through her grief.

There is an overlap between theological and psychological level in terms of depression as well. On a theological level, much of traditional thinking in the church has contributed to women's depression by rendering women guilty for the state of the world. Women's depression is often combined with guilt-feelings. Throughout much of the church's writing, women were held accountable for sin and evil.¹⁴ Christian theology conveyed in the "modern" church does not overtly address historical events such as witch hunts or Eve bringing about evil in creation, but these themes persist and run deep within tradition. "The sense of being to blame and bearing the shame of that blame is a strong, recurrent theme in depressed women, and much of theology reinforces this theme."¹⁵

Further, women's vulnerability to depression is increased

when the doctrine of original sin tells women that they give birth to sin, as well as bringing original sin into the world through Eve. Added to this doctrine is the teaching that suffering is righteous and godly for women, "saving" them in the eyes of God; taken together, these theological statements establish a situation where women adopt "God-ordained" blame and suffering, leading to depression. This depression is more difficult to confront because the theological stance is accepted by the church; the church as an institution may be too large to be challenged by individuals who are experiencing this damaging state of being.

Depression often comes about when women turn anger about their roles or their self-images inward. They can be caught in a state of depression because they may experience fear of dealing with what is really making them angry. For women, expressing anger often means contradicting what women have been told about themselves. Anger is threatening because it may lead to abandonment through disagreement, and ultimately isolation. Most women fear abandonment more than anything else.¹⁶ To keep home or work life steady and as peaceful as possible, they do not express anger directly because of fear of abandonment. This intentional or unintentional holding back and holding in of anger triggers depression, which can lead to physical ailments such as muscle aches and headaches or nausea, and sometimes, in extreme situations, cancer.

Two women realised during the two years together that they were turning their anger inward, and confronted the fact that their marriages were not healthy for them. One began

actively to consider leaving her husband. She was able to name herself as an abused women during one meeting. She sought individual long-term counselling with the facilitator to try and cope with the situation. As the group grew in strength and solidarity, the amount of conversation devoted to discussing men diminished. Self-awareness issues became more important. Building friendships and sustaining them was crucial for women. Levels of interaction became more numerous and more complex as more layers of experience were revealed. Connections between life-style and socio-political and religious issues were made and hopes, wishes and fears became guidelines for living instead of complete focus on male expectations. Nevertheless, self-expectation in terms of motherhood remained a primary concern for most women.

As women gathered courage and self-esteem together in Time Out, they learned that interaction in relationship to one another became part of their identity; members found that identity is dynamic and changing, not fixed in roles and stereotypes. In other words, during the early stages of the group's meetings, "I am" statements consisted of describing roles. Yet, once women were able to articulate their internal representation of Self, they found that they still based identity on connection with others, but not necessarily in terms of stereotypical roles. A growth of an independent self emerges, but not to the exclusion of a relational network. The women were learning interdependence based on relationship, rather than dependence or independence.

Sometimes, however, the group would revert to behaviour

which they were used to in their family, work or other group settings. Often, several members of the Time Out group felt that others' problems were more significant than theirs and so gave the others priority during sharing time. If focus remained on one woman exclusively, however, the other women did not share their stories and a subtle, unspoken value judgment was placed on the significance of sharing their own experience. Likewise, several women seemed to want to focus on the others because they were not willing to share at certain times in a group dynamic. One woman remained silent for months, except to add some humorous comments to the group's discussion. She admitted that she was depressed and that nothing in her life was changing, so she did not want to dwell on it within the group when others were experiencing significant changes in their lives. Her helplessness rendered other members helpless in relation to communicating with her on a deep level, and slowly a wall of silence developed around this particular woman and no one challenged the situation.

At times, the women's interaction shed new light on the topics being discussed; on the other hand, some discussion diverted the group from the task they were being asked to confront. Avoidance usually took the form of changing the subject by telling a story about the children or discussing teachers at the local school. The women chose within the group to divert attention from inner exploration and potentially painful discussion by taking time to continue discussions they might have outwith the group context.

The most significant issue within the group was that of power. None of the women directly addressed this issue in terms of the group dynamic, but a struggle about power occurred covertly since January 1991. Initial signs of control issues occurred when three members continued to interrupt the woman who was sharing. They were not able to listen to the woman's story without offering some kind of advice mixed with consolation. Two women especially had a great desire to solve the problems other women were sharing. The facilitator began to sense undercurrents of discomfort and disagreement at almost every meeting, and asked if the women needed to voice some opinions about group dynamic. The women did not speak up in terms of conflict within the group, but one was able to say that not everyone in the group was in the same place on the spiritual and psychological journey.

Initially, when a woman made a statement that another woman disagreed with, or said something that felt hurtful to another, there was silence or a smile that conveyed the thought: "That's ok, I know you didn't mean it." This reaction slowly was replaced with anger when one woman said something another found unsatisfactory. However, the anger was never expressed within the group. Often, it was expressed directly to the facilitator outwith the meeting time during the month. The women were very reluctant to engage in direct conflict. Thus, they never verbally set specific boundaries of communication about how to treat each other and how they wished to be treated, with the exception of their confronting the facilitator when they felt that she

had not handled the group dynamic well.

Two women in the group dealt with power issues by trying to take responsibility for others' feelings and situations. They seemed to want women who were finding home life difficult to handle it the way they would handle the same situation. Essentially, the facilitator observed that two women were prepared to dominate the group, possibly without even realising that they were doing so. Several others listened to advice and tried to act upon it, and two found that they could challenge the advice. The facilitator asked the group in two different sessions whether women found advice-giving helpful in the sharing time. The group grew silent and did not answer each time.

The power issues seemed to arise when several women seemed to feel threatened by the group dynamic. The issues were unspoken, and several times, passive aggressive behaviour was demonstrated within the group and also amongst individuals outside the meeting time. Possibly, this behaviour occurred in the group much like they occurred at home in the family dynamic. They may have surfaced because the women had no other model of functioning on which to base their behaviour when they felt uneasy or angry. These latent power issues seemed invisible to two women and became increasingly obvious to the others as the group work progressed. By May 1992, most of the members were concerned whether the group could continue after the facilitator left, but were still not able to address the power and conflict that had increased within the group dynamic, even when invited to do so. Somehow,

talking about and expressing anger was still too threatening to the group members. Nevertheless, the women maintained the desire to keep meeting after the facilitator left, because they felt that they needed time together to give each other strength. Thus, the uneasiness did not outweigh the sense of wanting to be together.

The power conflict behind the issues discussed seemed to stem from difficulty in creating a balance between autonomy and connectedness in the group. Feelings of competition and envy, potential abandonment and betrayal were behind the power struggles; some of these feelings were expressed to the facilitator alone. Sharing too much was a major issue for three women, for fear of being judged and abandoned as unable to cope. Likewise, connected with feelings of competition and fear, it was evident that almost all the women felt a longing to be together and for mutual affirmation and self-actualisation. There was anger expressed generally about restrictions and oppression that women felt. The problem arose when they could not express these feelings to each other about each other.

The psychological issue of separation and individuation while remaining connected to other women remained the most significant working point for the group throughout the two years. There were moments of feeling safe and close within the group. There were moments of excitement and laughter. There were also times when the pain and conflict ran deep within the group. The cutting edge for Time Out was for women to be attached while remaining individuals with

different, though similar needs and ways of functioning in life-situations. Struggling with issues of self-esteem and selfishness, combined with working toward self-understanding all were a part of this process of individuation, or claiming control over one's own life. These issues at the same time built connection in the group. The tension for Time Out and for all women comes when women try and balance their own individuality with remaining connected and open to sharing. During several meetings, it was difficult for some women to let others be individual thinkers. They seemed to believe that to have much in common meant thinking in similar terms at all times. Ultimately, the women were being challenged to find respect for diversity in unity.

Difficulties Encountered in Group Work with Time Out

Facilitating group work with women is not a smooth, trouble-free journey. There were several difficulties encountered during two years of group work. First, I was caught up in the mutual and conflicting interest represented in the group in terms of identifying with the women present at the same time as being the researcher and minister. Being an active group member sometimes meant that my sharing of opinion and emotion took place in a much more vulnerable way than a more detached facilitator's interaction might occur. There came a point in the group's life where I found myself having to choose between being the professional member, facilitating discussion and introducing new exercises, or being in solidarity with the group and its endeavours. In many ways,

my experiences as minister and researcher were bound up with the issues and feelings expressed by the group members.

As facilitator, I began to question professional codes of conduct with regard to feminist group work. Professional discretion and judgment led me not to enhance what was said in the group with what had been said by individual members to me outside the group context. However, within the group, there was a constant tension for me about how much I could share of my own experience and how much emotion I could show while still being taken seriously as a facilitator. To respect the integrity of each member without imposing my own belief-system and value judgments is one rule of counselling that had to be applied in the group so that women could be free to define themselves. On the other hand, neutrality is often seen as indifference or unwillingness to share personal insight. Thus, I constantly encountered the challenge to facilitate articulation of emotion and women's personal analysis while letting go of the group so that they assumed responsibility for what they did during the meetings.

I engaged in exchange with stories of my own and questions that focused attention on the topic at hand when the group lost direction or began being defensive. At times, I was more a member of the group than facilitator, but changed roles when the group hijacked a woman by offering advice and telling her that her thinking was "wrong."

I found that, like the other women in the group who found support from each other, I needed support outside of the facilitating and counselling role in the group. Sometimes

when I became unclear which direction the group was going, I had to discuss general ideas and principles with an external person who was aware of group facilitating issues to gain perspective and support, as well as debrief about the mistakes that I had made in interpretation during some meetings. This approach to group work is relatively new, and can be emotional and subjective. However, "walking alongside" women is the feminist model for both counselling and friendship, instead of dominating and being as clinical and neutral as possible.¹⁷

There were times when a power struggle ensued between two members; one was giving advice that another did not want, but they did not address the conflict verbally. They simply became more insistent about their own points of view. In that particular kind of situation, it was appropriate for me to ask the women what the real issue was behind the discussion, and to act as facilitator. In other situations, where women were sharing deeply, I found that participating in the sharing time changed my role, and the women were slightly uncomfortable with my own vulnerability. It was not always clear when it was appropriate to be vulnerable and when it was better to be detached and listening for sublimated issues. I discerned where I needed to be with the group often through intuitive reaction to the subject and feelings being expressed. This approach to facilitating is not method-oriented so much as pastorally oriented in terms of letting the group lead itself with a few guidelines given as needed. Goal-setting and group analysis which are

87t inherent characteristics of method-oriented therapy were not prevalent in this group's work. Thus, later analysis became less "scientific" in method than traditional models; change was not quantified in terms of meeting goals so much as describing feelings and new behaviour. Change also occurred at different rates and was not always permanent.

Another difficulty encountered in Time Out was that the women, through power plays and attempt to control others, were playing out some of the dysfunction in their own families through the group; control and indispensability were the most prominent issues women conveyed through their behaviour during sharing time. As facilitator, I debated whether to confront the situation, or let it go until other members of the group were ready to address it. I decided that group members needed to bring the matter up in the group context, and I would be available to aid articulation as needed. However, I invited the group once to engage in conversation about control issues. They were not willing to do so on a personal level. Several women clearly were not ready for that kind of discussion, and others may have felt threatened by the conflict that might have become overt in the group. Nevertheless, by not dealing with the increasingly apparent power issues, the group continued to engage in covert conflict without naming it as such. This conflict led to some negative feeling about group work and in two women, a desire to leave the group. They decided though to give the group a chance to work out these issues, and remained as members. However, the initial desire to share

and build trusting relationships faltered somewhat for three women as Time Out continued.

A third difficulty arose when the women stereotyped members of the group and set standards for friends outside the group, in terms of mothering and behaviour toward friends. Harmful gossip occurred during sharing time during four sessions, which was a way for those gossiping to avoid addressing their personal stories. Those who were hearing the gossip were upset with it, but again, were afraid to confront the gossiping women directly, possibly believing that too much conflict would tear the group apart. Three women spoke to me about the gossip element creeping into sharing time. I asked them to address it in the group and made it clear that I would not, in good faith, take responsibility for their discomfort in the group setting. There was no mention of this harmful element during group time during my presence, so the judgmental gossip continued.

The women themselves expressed that they had difficulty knowing what to do about the future of the group once the facilitator moved away. They debated for three meetings whether to open the group's membership to invite one or two other women amongst them. Two women believed that they needed to open the group up and hear other women's stories. The rest thought that they would rather not share with others, because it took them so long to be vulnerable in this group. The way they wanted to share with others was to start new groups which they could lead throughout the church and at work. I cautioned them that it was helpful to start sharing

groups, but to be careful about facilitating such a group without doing some research in terms of feminist psychology and theology. One woman did not want to start other groups like Time Out so much as live her new understanding of a liberated life, and share her experience with others. The same woman was in favour of opening the group's membership. She had difficulty understanding the others' need to maintain exclusivity after this research project was completed, if at the same time, they wanted to share what they'd learned. Two members repeated that they did not want to be vulnerable in front of strangers, when they had worked for almost two years to get where they were as a group. One woman thought the group would stagnate without opening up to new ideas and women. The group resolved to remain exclusive and meet in each other's homes, though this decision was not unanimous. The fear of becoming vulnerable with women outside the group as well as the desire to remain exclusive to preserve group integrity in several women's minds countered much of the feminist ethic of sharing and connection with all women being promoted within the group. However, being in a safe place was a primary issue for most women in the group at that point of decision, and all members agreed to honour their need. Most women needed to be in a secure situation still before they were willing to risk sharing. The ones who shared the least in the last few weeks, however, were the ones who were most opposed to opening the group to other women. They seemed to feel too vulnerable during the time of transition that the group was experiencing. The group outlined its

plans for the future based on its decision, and agreed to meet in June 1992 after the facilitator moved away.

difficulty, instead of remaining isolated.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties encountered in Time Out, it became clear that developing a community of women with similar backgrounds effectively changed the women's outlook on their life-situations and their relationship to God and the church. Developing community with feminist psychology, theology and worship at its foundation called women to better understand why they function the way they do and offered an alternative to their feelings of dissatisfaction with their lives. The members of Time Out were able to redefine power in their own lives, though they were not able to address the power issues arising amongst women in a group. There may not have been the trust level necessary to engage in conflict or the group may have not discerned the power issue as something that was of greatest importance to them at the time. This issue may have become a discussion point in the future for the group whenever members felt ready to deal with conflict directly. Ultimately, however, the group asked the question several times through worship and self-evaluation: why are we called together and given to each other? They learned that they could be companions to each other, either as a group or in individual relationships outside the group. Several women learned that they did not have to take responsibility for other people's behaviour, either in the group or with people in their families and work places. Many of the women learned

what faithful friendship was about for the first time, and began to accept support when they were experiencing difficulty, instead of remaining isolated.

The hope behind this group work is that it will lead to women's journey to emancipation from stereotypes and traditional roles within family and church. As women change their outlooks on their lives and faith, there will be a challenge for men to hear women's stories and interpretation of the effects patriarchy has had on them. Men then have a choice to adopt a new way of being or to reinforce dominant/subordinate functioning through oppressive action. If they choose to journey toward greater freedom, they can also choose to come together, as men, to open up issues that are important to them and find where they have participated in a system which is harmful to women, and also to them. As women and men separately do the work they need to do, then they each can begin to make space for each other in the church. Men may have to give up power and learn to share it while women need to learn to take responsibility for themselves and embrace empowerment. The group work for each will show the benefits of men and women learning to share their true selves, and build a foundation for koinonia.

The next section will take the historical, liturgical and psychological summaries found in the first part of this research and combine it with the observations from the group work with Time Out, to develop contributions and corrections to traditional views of church history, practices of worship, and psychology-based pastoral care. Finally, all these

elements will be woven together together to present a

ENDNOTES

paradigm for reconciliation and, ultimately, koinonia, in the church.

1. See John 14.

2. Genesis 3.

3. Atonement theories describe the reconciling nature of Christ's crucifixion. The substitution hypothesis that Christ's suffering brought about atonement from its own sin and therefore eternal life.

4. See Richardson, 1969, *The Development of Christian Theology*. London: Duckworth, 1969, pp. 21-23.

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ENDNOTES

1. See John 15.

2. Genesis 3.

3. Atonement theories describe the reconciling nature of Christ's crucifixion. They develop hypotheses that Christ's suffering brought saved humanity from its own sin and therefore eternal death.

4. See Richardson, Alan, The Dictionary of Christian Theology. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1969. pp. 22-23.

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Introduction

The survey of women's roles in Christian tradition found in chapter two, combined with the issues emerging in the case study with Time Out, lead to a direct challenge to the church's understanding of church history. The following chapter contributes a revised understanding of church history from a feminist perspective gained from research and group work experience. This revised view corrects assumptions that historians have maintained throughout the centuries of Christianity. The revised outlook on church history and its effects on today's church is one aspect of shaping a new *koinonia* for the future. Without understanding the patriarchal bias of historical record and theological development, the church will not confront its participation in dominant/subordinate thinking and action. If this approach to functioning within the church does not change, then there is little possibility for emancipated community to develop.

Corrections and Contributions to Traditional Bible Interpretation

To relieve women of the burden of guilt which patriarchal understanding of church history has bestowed upon them for being women and therefore, second class or, in the worst case, evil, women must find their own niche in history. Men

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CHAPTER TWELVE: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO
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theological and historical stereotyping is justified by men and women by quoting scriptural texts. Therefore, it is important for women to start with the bible as they begin the journey of discovering their hidden history. Women must also move one step further, and find the emancipatory stories of women in Christian history and biblical interpretation that have been recorded and buried, or passed down through oral tradition.

Because the bible is one of the most significant foundations for faith in the Protestant Church, it is helpful for women to begin looking at the bible through a feminist lens, instead of through traditional interpretation. Viewing the biblical text through this lens is the first correction toward patriarchal thinking and contribution toward building emancipated community in the church.

However, it has become clear that the New Testament teaching regarding the place of women, particularly when seen in the light of its contemporary background, is revolutionary. This teaching, if it had been properly applied, would have brought radical changes both in attitude and in behaviour.¹

The women in Time Out discovered that they knew very few of the female characters in the bible. What they did know about women in the bible was that the more familiar characters lived most often in servant roles and were glorified for their servanthood. When they learned names and stories of less well-known women in biblical stories, they claimed that they wanted to know more about these women, especially when they were involved in stories of empowerment.

Reading the bible as a group and learning about female experiences in its stories is one way in which to begin to confront the patriarchal bias biblical interpreters have adopted since text criticism began. The editors of the recently published Women's Bible Commentary point out that group work which focuses on feminist study of the bible can adopt various methods of interpretation; however, the empowerment of such work affects women significantly.

There are many different directions that feminist study of the Bible has taken. Some commentators have attempted to reach 'behind the text' to recover knowledge about the actual conditions of women's lives in the biblical period. Others have paid attention to what goes on in the telling of the stories and the singing of songs, using literary approaches to shed new light on metaphors, images, and narrative about women. Still others have tried to discover the extent to which even the biblical writings that pertain to women are shaped by the concerns and perspectives of men and yet how it can still be possible at times to discover the presence of women and their own points of view between the lines.²

The editors add that many women have struggled with the issues of how women in faith communities can read the bible in the light of what feminist study has discovered.

Contemporary feminist study of the Bible has not set out either to bring the Bible into judgment or to rescue it from its critics. But to read the Bible self-consciously as a woman is a complex experience, alternately painful and exhilarating. There is a great sense of empowerment, however, that comes from reading the Bible as a woman in the company of other women.³

To add the feminist perspective of biblical women is to see the strength of women above and beyond their servant roles in bible story and interpretation. When women meet as a group

and discover a new perspective about these biblical characters, they begin to develop a new perspective on all the writings in the bible which keep women powerless.⁴ Women begin to question the so-called objectivity with which biblical interpretation has been used to reinforce their own suffering-servant roles. The women in Time Out struggled with the suffering servant image through many discussions about self-sacrifice and selfishness. Their feelings of guilt for developing self by lessening their servanthood in the family and at work, could easily be reinforced through traditional interpretations. Because the bible was such an important aspect of Christian faith to several women in Time Out, they took traditional interpretation seriously, not having heard alternatives. Once they were able to encounter feminist interpretation, they were empowered to begin struggling toward making a place for themselves in their daily living.

The biblical message most emancipatory for women may be in "Take up your mat and walk," instead of being the sacrificial lamb or suffering servant. Christ was not passive in his decision to sacrifice himself - he actively chose this path. Women often do not make a conscious decision to sacrifice themselves for their families and those in need. They simply do it because that is what they are taught is required of them. Again, the bible reinforces this message for them in 1 Peter 2. 19-21 and 1 Peter 3. 1, where they are told to endure suffering patiently and be submissive. Without a feminist hermeneutic or an understanding of cultural

household codes of the early church times, women can easily take these passages literally and develop a lifestyle that renders them passive and guilty without room for their own growth and health. Time Out members began to fight this tendency through discussion, but some still could not eliminate feelings of guilt and selfishness when they spent time doing what they wanted to do or took space to themselves.

Biblical interpretation through a feminist lens is only the beginning of the path toward emancipation for women, and also men. Reconstruction of women's history in the church also is a necessary contribution for new understanding of women's and men's roles and the effect of patriarchy upon them. One method of finding historical emancipation models for women is to study matriarchal dominance structures found in historical communities. However, to develop a process which works toward koinonia, women need to find emancipatory models which do not depend on dominant/subordinate ways of functioning in relationships. To establish another dominance/subordinate model with reversed roles does not aid the development of interactive, egalitarian community.

Rather than restrict women's historical agency and powers to such prehistorical times, some feminist historians seek to construct heuristic models that can help us to measure women's power and influence within patriarchal history. In order to do so they seek not only to restore women to history and history to women but also to reconceptualize history and culture as the product and experience of both women and men.⁵

For women to gather together and read feminist interpretation and discuss it, and finally to live with the insights that

feelings of hurt and anger may emerge over the fact that this new focus brings, is to create an alternative model for women have been blamed as the cause for the downfall of being in the church. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza describes humankind since Judeo-Christian tradition first developed, such a group of women who work to move into a new understanding of their lives in this context: Without acknowledging these feelings, women cannot engage emotionally in the struggle to critically evaluate and change

Rather than defining women's relationship to God by their sexual relationship to men and through the patriarchal structures of family and church, a feminist Christian spirituality defines women's relationship to God in and through the experience of being called into the discipleship of equals, the assembly of free citizens who decide their own spiritual welfare.⁶ The investment in

retaining the patriarchal system will continue to use

The gathering of women in therapeutic and spiritual groups which are empowering to them replaces the images of witch, virgin, martyr, saint and suffering servant/mother. They have Alternative images for women arise when they see biblical and historical women through a feminist perspective. These images show assertive women such as the woman at the well,⁷ who spread the news about Christ's presence and identity with her townspeople, as well as women who were pioneers and leaders throughout church history. Hildegard of Bingen is an example of a leader who was a scholar, musician and theologian in the 12th century.⁸ Another pioneer in her time was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote The Woman's Bible in the 19th century. It is women such as these who break through the stereotypes that have been established for all women. Stories and images of empowered women who did not accept the limitations patriarchy put upon them are the most helpful for women struggling to redefine their own roles.

Women must be aware that, along with feminist study,

feelings of hurt and anger may emerge over the fact that women have been blamed as the cause for the downfall of humankind since Judeo-Christian tradition first developed. Without acknowledging these feelings, women cannot engage emotionally in the struggle to critically evaluate and change the patriarchal system under which they have lived and still live today. Emotional engagement becomes the driving impetus to work for change even when there are barriers to confront during the confrontation process. Those invested in retaining the patriarchal system will continue to use traditional interpretations of women's roles based on male-biased biblical scholarship.

Women need to develop a righteous anger about how they have been portrayed in historical terms, and how these terms continue to define women's roles today. Anger can bring about the energy and desire to challenge the patriarchal system which promotes only servant roles or harmful, negative stereotypes of women through misuse of scriptural text. Through study and discussion women, and eventually men, can begin to acknowledge the historical bias behind biblical interpretation, and challenge the claim that patriarchal interpretation is authoritative in itself for the present day.

Most promising for women is to focus on Christ's presence in the bible. Feminist interpretation points out the difference between Jesus' and women's situations in terms of suffering servant and self-sacrificial behaviour. Jesus sacrificed himself from a position of power - male

teacher/rabbi. As rabbi, he challenged the male religious leadership, confronting them with their injustices.⁹ His message to those in power was to be servant, as found in Luke 22. 24-27.

On the other hand, Jesus told the powerless a different message.¹⁰ He talked with women and healed them despite the taboo of doing so at the time. He had a ministry to servants, children, lepers, the poor, the sick and what biblical writers called the possessed. Jesus also called the powerful to account for the suffering and unequal treatment of the poor and needy.

The message here for women is a call to become empowered by looking at the world through new eyes. The biblical message for them is to find power to become themselves, instead of continuing to sacrifice their whole lives without critically making a choice to do so. Those who exist in oppressed situations are called to freedom through Christ's message. Those who are already in positions of power and free to make decisions are called to be servants. Essentially, feminists know that there are two gospels; one for the oppressed and one for the oppressors.

Conclusion

Through this message of freedom for those who are in subordinate positions, women can find courage together to challenge the stereotypes based on historical interpretation. As they discover their own hidden history, beginning with emancipation of women's stories in the bible, women can begin

to contribute toward an egalitarian partnership in the church. They also can begin to add an alternative dimension to worship through reinterpretation of historical texts and liturgies.

The next chapter will address specifically the contribution women can make to worship by bringing about change in liturgy that is inclusive and emancipatory for all people. This change, along with a wider view of church history slowly will begin to change the teachings and approach to care-giving in the church. Women and men will be called to engage in a new partnership based on equal worth. This partnership is the key to promoting life-enhancing community by allowing all people to engage in community openly and equally.

9. See Luke 10: 43-44.

10. See Luke 4: 18-19.

ENDNOTES

1. Evans, Mary. Woman in the Bible. London: The Paternoster Press, 1983. p. 132.
2. Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. The Women's Bible Commentary. Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992. p. xv.
3. Ibid., p. xv.
4. See for example Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 11 and 14.
5. Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1983. p. 86.
6. Ibid., p. 349.
7. See John 4. 7-26.
8. For a discussion of Hildegard of Bingen's work, see The Penguin Dictionary of Saints. Donald Attwater, ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965. pp. 170-171.
9. See Luke 11. 42-46.
10. See Luke 4. 18-19.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

Christian worship is concerned both with memory and imagination, but central to worship is *metanoia*,¹ or

Introduction

Any encounter with God changes women; Part of the work necessary for developing *koinonia* involves confronting patriarchal-based worship practices and language. Worship is an important aspect of how community expresses itself liturgically to God and to each other. In *koinonia*, that expression must allow every part of the community to hear and share words important and meaningful for them at some point. This chapter challenges traditional views of worship by developing alternatives based on literature and experiences of Time Out. Contributions to the field of liturgics include emancipating worship by using new language for humanity and God, developing new and meaningful rites for women, and incorporating women's pastoral issues specifically into worship events.

Emancipated Worship

lines three possible ways to respond to To combine emancipated worship with liturgical imagination is necessary for women's spiritual survival. Emancipated worship adopts a feminist outlook where images of God and written and spoken liturgies develop inclusive language and metaphor. God is perceived as working through women's struggle for dignity and survival in a combined physical and spiritual sense. Women, through feminist liturgy, learn about experiences that connect them with creation, and learn to love themselves as women. Women also learn to claim that

through their own experiences, God may reveal Self. Christian worship is concerned both with memory and imagination, but central to worship is metanoia,¹ or transformation. Any encounter with God changes women; because worship consists of different forms of conversation with God, it can lead to change or metanoia, by bringing out new perspective through human-divine dialogue.

Language

Because liturgy is by nature dialogical, language used in it is deeply important. Proctor-Smith emphasises that the Word itself is active, involving speaking, singing, praying, gesture, visual symbolism, and silence. Verbal language is one way in which patriarchy especially manifests itself. Human and God-language is too-often exclusively male, rendering women invisible and implying that there is common ground between men and God which does not exist between women and God.²

Proctor-Smith outlines three possible ways to respond to the problem of androcentric human language in worship. Worship may consist of non-sexist, inclusive, or emancipatory terminology.

- Nonsexist language seeks to avoid gender-specific terms.
- Inclusive language seeks to balance gender references.
- Emancipatory language seeks to transform language use and to challenge stereotypical gender references.³

The problem with nonsexist language is that it promotes a genderless world, or may even subtly reinforce male

stereotypes by assuming that nongender-specific language such as "creator" is male. Inclusive language becomes problematic as well. It assumes that male and female images are symmetrical, when, in fact, the female is devalued linguistically and socially. For example, "Mistress" conveys something entirely different than "Master," "Lady" is not parallel to "Lord," and "Madam" conveys negative connotations which are not shared by "Sir."⁴ Thus, language, while attempting to be liberating, can in fact sustain the current social structure. What Proctor-Smith calls "verbal emancipatory language" claims degraded and stereotyped terms and makes them words of pride and power, leading to transformation. "Woman" has changed from a derogatory term to one meaning independence, competence and seriousness of purpose.⁵ In addition, emancipatory language aids the creation of a collective identity for a group which has been divided and unfocused until now. Language feeds women's spirituality and "defines women's relationship to God in and through the experience of being called into the discipleship of equals, the assembly of free citizens who decide their own spiritual welfare."⁶ To move one step further, "emancipatory language is necessary to move beyond the limits of androcentric language to the generation of new vision and a new way of speaking about that vision."⁷ Visual emancipatory language involves being aware of the messages human beings receive from images in the media or in art, critical personal reflection on how these images affect women, and finally, choosing the images with which women want to live. To

counter stereotypes and widen and introduce new roles for women, images must be available that show women's power and authority and skill beyond what society and church has defined for them.

Physical emancipatory language, or nonverbal behaviour, attempts to create mutuality and symmetrical relationships, instead of the dominant/subordinate situations that exist currently. Thus, issues of elevated and sacred space must be addressed as part of the feminist liturgical challenge to patriarchy. Movement^s such as the kiss of peace gesture, challenge asymmetrical relationships by introducing public interaction that does not depend on domination and subordination. The relationship between human beings is either enhanced on an egalitarian level or, adversely, controlled by language in liturgy. Only by constructing a whole new way of speaking can women heal the relationship that has broken down for many of them.

Language used to describe God is equally an important issue for those who are challenging patriarchy in the church. Titles given to God often duplicate those given exclusively to men, granting men authority and reinforcing patriarchal relationships in society and church. Likewise, women are denied legitimate power by the absence of female references.

God-language is symbolic language and its meaning is shaped by the gender-identity of the user. In other words, the way in which women address God will shape their relationship with God. If women use Lord and King almost exclusively, they indicate that a relationship of dominance and submission are

appropriate for them. Trinitarian language has also been thought of in male terms for centuries, and has been reinforced as steadfast church doctrine and creed; those who tamper with the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" are considered to be heretics within the church, instead of people using their imaginations in worship. Traditional language has become deified.

Again, nongender-specific terms and inclusive approaches may take a step toward addressing patriarchal symbolism used for God, but the danger exists that references will either be assumed male or even stereotypical gender roles for females. Female images of God often fail to be emancipatory. Carol Walker Bynum has studied the use of female imagery for God in medieval religious communities; she notes that male use of female imagery reflected male assumptions about the female "nature." In particular, she found that Cistercian monks who used motherhood images for God and Christ depended on the medieval interpretations of motherhood, assuming the theory of female inferiority. She concludes, "it was not women who originated female images of God." The images were originated by men and remained firmly androcentric. She found, however, that the nuns did not use female imagery as often as the monks, and that when they did, the images included the authority to teach, to judge and to administer.⁸ Naming God in feminine terms can help women to learn to value their own power, affirm the female body, celebrate women's connectedness and heritage, and affirm female assertion. Merlin Stone cites numerous examples throughout her book,

When God was a Woman, where the Goddess was associated with culture, civilisation, law and order, and often thought of as the great patron of a city.⁹ Women held places of respect in societies that thought of God in female terms; the task now is to use female imagery without getting caught in current gender stereotypes and archetypes within the symbolism.

An example of an archetype problem can be seen when God is identified as female in terms of "Mother." Historian Gerda Lerner names this identification "maternalism"--women are meant to be mothers.¹⁰ Feminists must remember that not all women are mothers: some women are single, and that giving birth is not the only form of creativity. Sallie McFague suggests: "God should be imagined in female, not feminine, terms, and, the female metaphors should be inclusive of but not limited to maternal ones."¹¹

Indeed, if the female model of God is limited to motherhood, then female sexuality is solely connected with mothering in a way that fails to do justice to women's sexuality.

By explicitly including female sexuality in a model of God which recognises sexuality as a valuable model for God's activity in the world, women's sexual experience can be celebrated and delighted in. This model would take us a long way toward emancipating women from fear and hatred of our own bodies.¹²

God addressed as lover in female terms frees women from the cultural taboo placed on female sexuality, which is seen as dangerous and shameful. Seeing God as female friend also frees women from automatically putting their relationships

with men before their relationships with women and children. Friendships with men often tend to be superior/subordinate relationships. Symmetrical friendships can be opened to women by claiming God's female friendship.

Proctor-Smith has outlined some proposals for current change in constructing female God-language:

1. Emancipatory God-language must challenge the human colonised imagination; men and women cannot let images harden into idols. Images need to remain flexible.
2. Emancipatory God-language must include specifically female referents. It is necessary to discover new female names for God, but also to claim "neutral" names such as "Friend," as female.
3. Emancipatory God-language must balance diversity and unity. Women are diverse, and one female image for God must not become dominant; the value of unity is that women can bring together diversity into one community.
4. Female language for Goddess must be chosen and used with a critical eye toward its meaning and use in patriarchal religion and culture. "Mother" and "Lady" need to be redefined and contextualised before they can be freeing images of God for women.
5. A valuable resource for enlarging human imaginations about God-language is to be found in the varied and rich traditions of Goddess-worship, as practiced in ancient times, as continuing in the present, and as reconstructed by contemporary feminists. Images such as "ashe," the power-to-make-things-happen, as well as the trinitarian nymph, mother,

and old woman provide new approaches to a three-in-one God and open possibilities for emancipatory language and worship in Christian circles as well as in Goddess religions.

6. Emancipatory God-language must be firmly grounded in the lived experiences of real women, resisting romanticisation and generalisation. Pastoral issues for women are revealed in the God who cries out for justice, who suffers with women (just as with men), who are abused by those who are supposed to love them, and who struggles for survival with women.

7. Emancipatory God-language must also take into account the particularity of women's experience: the racial, ethnic, religious, and class distinctions, which divide women from one another as women, but which also make them distinctive. In other words, God must not turn into the White Goddess; experiences of women of colour need to contribute to the construction of new metaphors for God.¹³

Proctor-Smith's outline for emancipatory language encompasses women's experience of life, much like the traditional view of the male God has incorporated men's experience (with an occasional reference in the bible to stereotypical female characteristics). Her emphasis that God must not turn into an exclusively white female image is helpful, and gives a message to women that they too must be careful not to be exclusive. Her overall outline is useful in terms of confronting problems people using emancipatory language might encounter. Turning Christianity into a Goddess cult or introducing a female metaphor to the exclusion of the male defeats the purpose of language that is

meant to be freeing for everyone. Proctor-Smith's scheme however, cannot be implemented without much education about patriarchy, followed by dialogue amongst women and men who are invested in breaking down stereotypes and language barriers. ?

The women in Time Out, when they thought of God in terms of female metaphor named God as Mother and Friend. One woman was open to the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Ghost being changed to Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, but had not thought about female images in addition to the traditional male ones. For the most part, however, members of Time Out did not adopt emancipatory language so much as neutral language. Proctor-Smith is correct in saying that neutral language does not empower women; however, changing images of God takes a great deal of courage and time, because so many personal and faith issues accompany the theological shift. Women have to believe that their experience is authoritative enough to be a part of God's being, like male experience became at the outset of patriarchy. Women also have to understand their own negative stereotypes of femaleness and work through them before allowing God to be feminine in their minds. Most women had a picture of God in their heads, and all but two saw a male God. Members were open to a feminine metaphor, but could not change the visual image in their mind's eye. Only through practice and continued experience of empowerment through worship and bible study did women begin to accept a female image visually.

Rites

Any religious movement needs to examine the message it relays through its liturgy. Specific elements within worship are all open to new critique and redefinition through the feminist liturgical movement. Worship takes a particular moment or feeling and makes it an event--baptism is reclaimed as a new beginning for women, rites of healing lead to reconciliation, rites of passage celebrate the seasons of life, and cyclical rites lead to remembering and transformation. Symbols and movement, speech, song, silence, colour, physical space, stories, dreams and feeling all have their place in the liturgy, for both women and men. Rites of baptism (initiation) and the eucharist (ongoing nurture), are main factors in the development of the Christian community's character. On the other hand, if these rites serve to initiate both women and men into a patriarchal ecclesial structure, and female identity is defined and maintained within that structure, oppressive behaviour continues. If women join together in "doing worship," restructuring rites and liturgies, then the institution is transformed for them. Women realise that there is a need for feminist theology to be more than idea--it needs to be made concrete in the form of liturgy and feminist spirituality. Thus, there needs to be "free space" for feminist Christians to address their own issues and develop their own liturgies. Schussler Fiorenza sums up the work of women gathering as their own community:

In exorcising the internalized structural evil of

patriarchal sexism as well as in calling the whole church to conversion and repentance, Christian feminism and feminist theology reclaim the right and power to articulate our own theology, to reclaim our own spirituality, and to determine our own and our sisters' religious life. As the church of women, we celebrate our religious powers and ritualize our visions for change and liberation. We bond together in struggling with all women for liberation, and we share our strength in nurturing each other in the full awareness and recognition that the church of women is always the ecclesia reformanda, the church on the way to and in need of conversion and "revolutionary patience," patience with our failures as well as with those of our sisters . . . To advocate women's liberation movement in biblical religion as the hermeneutical center of feminist critical theology of liberation and to speak of the church of women does not mean to advocate a separatist strategy but to underline the visibility of women in biblical religion and safeguard our freedom from male spiritual control.¹⁴

Conclusion

Emancipatory worship is the greatest challenge to the church today. To engage in this kind of liturgy, the church must

Pastoral Issues arising in Worship

It becomes increasingly obvious that feminist liturgy which addresses women's pastoral issues leads to social and political change. Feminist spirituality, claims Proctor-Smith, is the "string through the middle" between liturgy and human relationship through female as well as male experience, change.¹⁵ To develop feminist spirituality, she says, women need to identify with other women, use the language that God and communication with God, widening the horizons of traditional views and opening the door to a more complete and egalitarian understanding of God's community, *koinonia* themselves, and be able to imagine a different world. Women work concretely with their memories and imaginations toward transformation through liturgy and ritual, as they perpetually engage in struggle. Women can learn to celebrate their lives through their worship, in relationship to each other and to God. It is the beginning of an Exodus journey, where grace and blessing for women become the focus.

Rosemary Radford Ruether claims that women need to get in

touch with the sense of original blessing that encompasses their lives. This original blessing can be acted out through ritual.

2. Proctor-Smith, Marjorie. *In Her Own Right: Constructing a Feminist Liturgical Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.

1. A reencounter with original blessing is experienced as a leap to a new state of being that breaks the hold of false power upon our spirit. In this sense, it is psychologically experienced as something beyond our present state of existence. But, at the same time, we know it to be the most natural thing in the world, since, when we encounter original blessing, we immediately recognize it as our true selves--something with which we are already gifted, not something we have to strive to achieve.¹⁶

6. Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. CM Press, Ltd., 1983. p. 349.

Conclusion

Emancipatory worship is the greatest challenge to the church today. To engage in this kind of liturgy, the church must first adopt a new understanding of women's roles. The challenge that women bring to the church is to redefine power, and explore alternative interpretations of the God-human relationship through female as well as male experience. The contribution women bring is a different perspective of God and communication with God, widening the horizons of traditional views and opening the door to a more complete and egalitarian understanding of God's community, koinonia.

1. Chapter fourteen turns to corrections and contributions to traditional psychology as used in pastoral counselling. Combined with emancipatory worship and an uncovering of women's strength in church history and biblical texts, feminist psychology can bring about a whole new understanding of the roles of women and their gifts which can be shared in koinonia.

ENDNOTES

1. Metanoia means here the radical change or transformation, or conversion in context of the soul's experience.
2. Proctor-Smith, Marjorie. In Her Own Rite: Constructing a Feminist Liturgical Tradition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. p. 62.
3. Ibid., p. 63.
4. See Miller, Casey and Kate Swift. The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers. Second Edition. London: The Women's Press, 1989. pp. 93, 143.
5. Ibid., p. 95.
6. Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1983. p. 349.
7. Proctor-Smith, p. 67.
8. Bynum, Caroline Walker. Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. pp. 129-135, 140, 172-190.
9. Stone, Merlin. When God was a Woman. Harvest/HBJ Publishers, 1976. pp. 129-152.
10. Lerner, Gerda. The Creation of Patriarchy. Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 28.
11. McFague, Sallie. Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. pp. 98-99.
12. Proctor-Smith, p. 111.
13. Ibid., pp. 112-114.
14. Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984. p. 7.
15. Proctor-Smith, p. 164.
16. Ruether, Rosemary Radford. Women-Church: Theology and Practice. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985. p. 86.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PASTORAL COUNSELLING

Introduction

Psychology as it informs pastoral care is strongly connected to historical and social understandings of people and their roles in life-situations. Traditional psychological models used as a foundation for pastoral care, as outlined in Chapter four, can be detrimental to women's well-being. In the case-study involving Time Out, most of the problems with traditional psychology were avoided. Problems of isolation and hierarchical relationship were confronted by the very nature of group work as a therapeutic tool. Indeed, individual counselling sessions enhanced therapeutic group work, but the connection between women established in Time Out was claimed by the women to be the most important aspect of their work. They said repeatedly how relationship-building in the group was the most important factor in their feeling support and having the courage to make changes in their lives. Their experience and the experience of an increasing network of self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, battered women's groups and various addictive substance recovery programs, shows the significance of group work for human recovery and development. Mutual support is the key to all of these group situations. What is unique about a feminist Christian therapeutic group is that group members take on not only self-analysis, but strategies for changing a patriarchal system within the church. Their work

however, a person may never be able to eliminate the feeling that she or he is "sick" and needs help from a dominant doctor-figure. Some people may invest in this kind of therapy, depending on their needs. However, others may find that they build self-esteem more quickly and with greater conviction about self-worth if they are in a supportive group situation where other members travel or have travelled similar journeys. An individualistic psychological model, as

Challenges to Traditional Psychology as a Basis for Pastoral Care

Group work challenges the purely traditional psychological basis for pastoral care on two levels. First, group work, by its very nature eliminates the sense of isolation that individuals feel, especially if they are seeking help with one or more aspects of their lives. Supportive group dynamic can help a person understand that she or he is not the only one on earth who is experiencing difficulty. To feel that one is not alone brings about relief and a sense that problems can be overcome. Usually a person puts personal difficulty in perspective if he or she knows that others understand his or her experience. On the other hand, an individual, client-centred model may reinforce the isolation an individual might feel; she or he seeks help from a professional often because there is nowhere else to turn, and does not hear the experience of others who have encountered similar situations. Most psychological models do not allow the same kind of support that groups do. Individual therapy sessions may help a person to understand a situation more clearly, and feel the support of a paid professional;

however, a person may never be able to eliminate the feeling that she or he is "sick" and needs help from a dominant doctor-figure. Some people may invest in this kind of therapy, depending on their needs. However, others may find that they build self-esteem more quickly and with greater conviction about self-worth if they are in a supportive group situation where other members travel or have travelled similar journeys. An individualistic psychological model, as explored in chapter four, does not allow community to develop, where support from friends and colleagues encourages health instead of adopting a clinical case-study approach to building self-esteem.

Second, the individualistic psychological approach may also promote a client-therapist dependency that is unhealthy. If a person seeking help grows to depend on the pastor or therapist as a crucial person in her or his life, the relationship may develop into an unprofessional, mutually needy syndrome. The therapist may become indispensable to the client and the client likewise may become essential to the therapist's work and personal gratification. This situation can occur in a group context as well, though it is more likely to be balanced by multiple input from group members than in a one-to-one situation. The isolation of individual counselling may indeed encourage unhealthy, and sometimes abusive relationships between therapist and counsellor. In extreme situations, physical abuse occurs. Marie Fortune, in Is Nothing Sacred? tells of one story where six women were sexually abused by their pastor. She claims

that this abuse is not unique to that particular church, but is more widespread than most people realise, throughout the western world. "Pastors' unethical behavior is not a new phenomenon; nor is it a new phenomenon that women who come forward to complain about such things are discounted and scorned."¹ Further, she explains that institutions such as the church will avoid doing justice by misnaming the problem.

Whenever the issue of clergy sexual contact with parishioners arises, the most frequent concern of clergy is to express their need to be protected from seductive, manipulative parishioners. Their anxieties surface immediately and they name the problem of clergy-parishioner sexual contact solely in terms of their vulnerability to seduction. This concern comes from clergy's very real anxiety about interacting with parishioners; it is best described as the pastor being "at risk" in the ministry. The risks are many. They include the sexual approach of a parishioner, false accusations of misconduct, or misusing pastoral power only to meet the pastor's needs. But although the pastor is at risk, it is only the parishioner who is vulnerable. Parishioners look to a pastor to meet their needs for guidance, counsel, support, and care. In seeking help from someone who is a designated authority, who offers to provide these services, and who holds power, parishioners are vulnerable and thus able to be harmed or taken advantage of.²

Fortune outlines the extreme abuse of power in a dominant/subordinate relationship, based on individual counselling situations. This aspect of abuse is much more easily avoided in feminist group work, even if it is a mixed-gender group, because there are a number of people present who understand dominant/subordinate relationships, and can call each other into question if they sense a problem occurring. The abuse may be blatant or it may be subtle - emotional manipulation can be just as harmful as sexual assault.

The third challenge to the individualistic, traditional psychological approach to pastoral care is based on group work developed from a specifically feminist point of view. Outlined in chapter four are the basic problems encountered when traditional psychology is adopted as the authoritative basis for pastoral care. This tradition upholds the belief that women are not as mentally well-developed as men to function in the competitive working world. Different social emphases on women's and men's roles have turned into value judgments; men's roles have been identified with superior mental and physical ability, while women's roles have been equated with less-important caring and nurturing ability. Compared to men, women are perceived as having inferior mental and physical capacities.

If a pastoral care-giver studies psychological models without attending to feminist psychology, he or she may not be able to affirm women where they are mentally and spiritually. A pastoral care-giver may not even be aware of the stigma placed on women, and therefore could not address the destructive nature of stereotypes, such as "the weaker sex," "hysterical female," "overemotional women," "hypochondriac," and more. Guilt issues for women stem from many of these stereotypes because they have internalised them as negative, but true comment about their characters. Further, if a pastoral care-giver is not aware of the patriarchal framework from which these stereotypes stem, she or he will have difficulty creating the right kind of atmosphere for women to develop their own sense of identities

as they struggle to break through these negative self-images. Some counsellors may have trouble taking women's stories seriously and, at worst, many blame women for their own negative situations. Women who experience abuse encounter this blame frequently when talking with ministers or priests.³ *1 may many*

Psychological models as they have been adopted by many churches need to be emancipated from a patriarchal expert-client (dominant/subordinate) relationship. The following observations contribute to a more liberated approach to group work and correct the model that continues to keep people in an unhealthy system of relating.

Contributions of Group Work to Pastoral Care

Pastoral counselling models call for a more delineated sense of leadership and detachment than has been practised in the therapeutic group, Time Out. The hierarchical and individual counselling context is encouraged by the church; most professional training is geared toward this model. The approach used with Time Out presents a less clear-cut role for the facilitator and minister as counsellor and also accepts and respects subjective involvement. The crucial benefit of this kind of dynamic for women who are involved in intentional feminist group work is that the facilitator is mutually accountable to the group members. Likewise, the women take responsibility for their own work and development and do not transfer that responsibility to the facilitator who is often seen as counsellor, leader and advice-giver.

Mutual accountability eliminates the dominant/subordinate relationship of professional to client. It allows women to have power over their own care-giving and to name their needs together in a supportive, dynamic system. It also teaches them to respect each other's boundaries in the relational system, bringing about new skills in communication which they can take to their family situations and their work places. Through group process, a woman can experience valuable feedback from more than one person; this feedback comes from others who experience similar oppression that has affected them significantly in their lives. Even though two women in Time Out spoke with the facilitator individually on a regular basis about relationship issues outwith the context of the group, they were quick to point out that the group work was what allowed them to do more mental and spiritual work than simply talking with one person. They came to talk with me as pastor and facilitator about their thinking and experience, often related to issues arising in group context. Both individual discussion and group work were important to these women, but the friendships and support developed in the group were key aspects to these women's growing spiritual lives. In addition, the two women did not become dependent upon the facilitator as expert, but instead experienced a desire to do their own internal work instead of seeking answers from someone outside themselves. A dependency was not fostered in a professional-client situation; a network of support was established instead. No one person became indispensable.

A second contribution that a feminist group work approach

to therapy brings specifically to pastoral care is the ability for group support and work to inspire women and empower them. This empowerment occurs primarily from eliminating the patriarchal patterns of therapy. It also challenges the care-givers to study feminist psychology and feminist interpretation of history, bringing about a wider view of the pastoral ministry than exists in most church circles today.

Third, feminist group work as a pastoral counselling approach develops community within community; in other words, it establishes a microcosm of koinonia within the larger church. Thus, therapeutic groups have potential to become models for the wider church, whose function is to develop supportive community within the world.⁴ As women share their experience of belonging in a group of friends who challenge and support them at the same time, the church becomes aware of its potential in terms of community and may be stimulated to form additional groups which can connect together through common experience. Thus, group work not only serves a therapeutic purpose, it builds community within community and provides a model for the church in terms of koinonia.

Fourth, group work is a framework in which women not only confront patriarchal issues, they learn whether they are able to confront each other when they feel the need. Time Out had difficulty with direct confrontation with regard to power issues in the group, but some members were able to confront others when they disagreed about specific, non-threatening issues being discussed. It is less likely in a client-

professional therapy session that a counsellor will confront the expert when feeling threatened or in disagreement. Group work has the potential to teach women how to be assertive with their friends without threatening the friendship. Groups provide potential for taking risks with each member in an overall safe setting. However, this kind of work may take several years to develop, and confrontation may not occur until women have built up their own self-esteem. Part of functioning in healthy relationship, though, is being able to express oneself and one's desires and feelings openly without fear of being rejected. This open expression was a significant issue for members of Time Out, who, for the most part, had difficulty expressing themselves when they felt they were contradicting what they saw as a group consensus. Finally, group work can incorporate worship as part of the healing process. Worship, as discussed in the previous chapter, also brings community closer together and focuses on God, who is both within and outside the group. During worship, the group becomes able to externalise the inner work the members have done together and put it into a wider context of faith. Individual counselling sessions, though they may include a time of helpful prayer, rarely focus on intentional time set aside for a worship service to take place. Often, individual sessions involve the counsellor saying a prayer for the counsellor instead of them both contributing to a worship event on an equal level together. When group members take responsibility for their own worship, even periodically, they are able to create an event that is

most meaningful for them. As they engage God in their work together, they experience a new strength and sense of support that is larger than the group itself. The women in Time Out were unhappy with the lack of worship at the end of one meeting, and felt that their experience was incomplete without worship. Worship had become an integral part of their group work together.

Conclusion

Group work provides numerous contributions to the field of pastoral care. Indeed, it may be a more meaningful way for women and men to develop healthy relationship within a caring community than a one-on-one therapy session. The importance of community support is a basic Christian understanding of koinonia. Group involvement teaches members to do their own mental and spiritual work, introduces relational systems which members encounter in daily life, and eliminates the patriarchal structure of therapy. Women in Time Out claimed that group work changed their lives dramatically for the better. They also claimed that they wanted to share their new-found understanding of themselves and the situations in which they live by spreading the word about community. This desire to reach out is the foundation for building koinonia in the church, as described in the next chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. Fortune, Marie. Is Nothing Sacred? San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1989. p. 120.
2. Ibid., p. 121.
3. Conversation with five battered women in Hamilton Women's Shelter, 1991.

Introduction

This research so far has described a plan for building *koinonia* in the church, as well as how that plan initially may be implemented through group work with women. Once significant issues have been raised with women in a supportive group context and women have learned to name and deal with what is important to them, the potential arises for another group or groups to be developed with similar intent, within the church body. Indeed, as illustrated in the case study, women involved in group work wished to share the positive aspects of their experience together with others in a group context. As they appreciated the building of community together, their vision expanded into wishing to build greater community in the church. Carol Pierce describes this increasing empowerment in the church:

As she shares her experiences with other women, she redefines power for herself in a way that perceives it as expanding like love when shared. When others are empowered, her power expands. She can acknowledge the power she has and enjoys it. Power comes from cooperation and synergy rather than competition; from win-win situations rather than from win-lose.

Although the focus in this research has been upon one group called Time Out, a second women's group met within the church

PART IV: Paradigm for Healing in Ecclesia

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: PARADIGM FOR RECONCILIATION USING GROUP
WORK TO BUILD KOINONIA IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

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Although the focus in this research has been upon one group called Time Out, a second women's group met within the church

to discuss issues important to them. The second group, unlike Time Out, had an open membership with a greater cross-section of women attending. All ages of women were represented, with varied lifestyles and situations at home. Several members of Time Out attended this group as well; the second group did not develop the intimacy that Time Out did because of changing attendance and a specific, stated desire to work on a less emotional level. However, members began to celebrate those issues which they had in common, and looked forward to meeting together on a monthly basis. They also found that their friendships outside the group developed more deeply, and their problems were put in perspective when they heard other women's stories. Similar themes were raised in this group as had developed in Time Out, even though membership varied. Women discussed their mothering roles and singlehood, as well as the differences between women and men. They also wanted to explore faith issues and the role of the church in developing their theological belief-systems. Several concluded that the church is an institution that needs to be more sensitive to oppressed people, including women. The group unanimously decided that they wanted worship time together after each gathering, for much the same reasons as Time Out; worship enhanced their sense of friendship and solidarity and also brought God into the midst of their time together. The second group reinforced the principle that women can grow into close community together when they share experiences and find different definitions of themselves than have been given to them by a patriarchal

system. *Some of the work had begun in earnest.*

Thus, developing groups with members who have much in common, and also groups which have different backgrounds but similar experiences based on gender are fruitful endeavours for individuals and for community-building. Women in each group expressed several times how knowing that the group would meet on a regular basis made a significant difference in their daily lives. The gathering was a focus point during the month to which they could look forward. The groups clearly fed women in different ways; however, the positive, collective significance of the meetings for each woman reinforced the need for these kinds of gatherings for development of individuals and koinonia.

Women also began to initiate education about empowerment for the church as a whole after gathering together in community with other women. Bible studies began to involve discussions with a feminist lens. The ministers began to use emancipatory language, including both female and male images for God in worship, alongside illustrations that did not place characters in stereotyped roles. Biblical stories about women became the focus of a specific study series. Women increasingly took on significant leadership roles in the church. Church members began to feel very positive about their church and invited friends from the local area to come to worship and activities; membership began to increase significantly. Thus, in the case study, individual empowerment and small group support eventually affected the entire church in a positive and energetic way, and the

journey toward koinonia had begun in earnest.

The Next Step: Group Work with Men

I have outlined in the diagram found in chapter five a scheme for developing koinonia. The next step after initiating and working with women's groups is to develop groups which focus on men's issues for men. The reasoning behind this scheme stems from the understanding that men too encounter facts, patriarchal assumptions that are damaging to them in the theological and psychological ways. However, the difference between men's and women's experience of patriarchy is significant. Men begin their journey of exploration from a position of dominant power, while women do not. This dominance may not even be recognised by men, because often patriarchy is equated with masculinity instead of dominant/subordinate functioning. As a result, fostering a desire in men to meet together in a sharing context with this subject matter in mind is difficult. The women may be catalysts in the process by making it known to men how they have benefitted from meeting together. They also may challenge the men directly to understand women's pain. Some men may respond by sharing power and some may remain content with their dominant status. Yet, being vulnerable in a group is stereotypically not acceptable for men, so a greater barrier of fear and resistance has to be overcome before group work can be effective. If men are looking for a change in their lives, however, which includes spiritual empowerment and mutual support, group work is a supportive and effective

place to foster these things. ¹ Men learn early that life must always be rational. Moving through and beyond the collusion of dominance and subordination and into the transition is not a rational process. It requires a letting go, not demanding that everything must always be orderly and precise. It is not easy to let go of this need for rationality. When dealing with life as if everything can be quantified through facts, the illusion of life being rational is possible. When the process, i.e., how things happen, is opened up for discussion, everything ceases to fit into neat pockets and just are "that way." Brian Wren claims that men would prefer to be rational and in control.

A key word for masculinity as we know it is control [author's emphasis]. A true man is a man in control - of himself, of others, of events, and of the feminine side of himself and others. Control is an apt word: it suggests a predominance that can often be taken for granted. If you control a situation, you can allow considerable freedom within it so that your control is hardly noticed, by yourself or others.²

Yet, this basic male desire to control relationships by rules undermines the very heart of the gospel. Christ came to reinterpret the law into which male church leaders had locked their relationships. Jesus, and later Paul in Romans 7.4, called people to become free from rigid religious definitions and rules.

If men realise that there is a more holistic alternative to controlled, patriarchal living, they may wish to explore new ways of relating to people and God. As a man moves toward

the transition, he may feel that life is switching from being rational to irrational. Actually it is going from being rational to diverse ways of perceiving events and reacting.³

Leaving dominance is painful. Entering transition leads to confusion. Women who challenge men are no longer predictable to men, and may invoke men's anger. However, if each man can decide for himself whether or not he has much to learn from women, he can see that there is an option other than the patriarchal dominance-subordination that both he and others have lived with throughout their lifetimes. This option is a movement toward a relational way of living, where men and women take each other seriously as equally worthy human beings. Men may be interested in this relational living because they feel lonely; the lack-of-connectedness comes about when they learn hierarchical and competitive ways of functioning in the world. In community, new ways of listening, taking responsibility for one's own feelings, and treating each other with individual respect instead of stereotyping "appropriate" responses for each sex begin to surface. Sharing feelings directly and clearly is part of new communication to be found in a community journeying toward wholeness. When women change themselves and look for new ways to fulfil their lives, they at the same time challenge men to begin dealing with their own emotions, the way they connect with other people and the quality of spiritual life that they experience. However, the women's journey toward wholeness will not be the same as the men's. Men may need a "safe place" where they can begin to look at

their own lives and the expectations that they live with, even as dominants, and how they have been trained to be individualistic to the detriment of potentially close, meaningful relationships. Ultimately, they need to evaluate the definition of power for themselves, and whether having dominant power over others physically or emotionally is healthy for them as human beings.

Group Work as an Essential Element for Koinonia: Women and Men Together

Group work in the church that explores faith issues and allows for sharing experience in a feminist context opens the possibility for dialogue in the church between women and men. It also provides a model for other marginalised groups to find support and understand the nature of the system that rejects them. Group experience leads to empowerment of its members, a sense of solidarity, and the strength to call for change in a wider context. It also provides the relational paradigm for the whole church, journeying together toward koinonia.

As subordinates, women choose whether they wish the power differential they experience to change. Subordinates are the ones who start the process of change; by definition, those with power over others see no reason to change. However, women, the subordinates, are confined to someone else's definition of them as long as they are content to remain in their "place." Any movement from the subordinate-dominant scheme of living involves women moving first, for they are the ones who are invested in change. If men are interested

in relationship at all, they will notice women moving out of the subordinate thinking patterns and experience the tension of relationship not working the way it used to. Then men have a choice. They may rebel against women's changing or they may use the tension to look at themselves in new ways. The presence of tension makes it difficult to remain connected in relationship, so movement must occur if there is investment in relationship. However, this movement may not coincide between women and men. Indeed, women themselves move at different paces as do men.

Once women begin to challenge men's power, they may find that men are not used to being questioned in terms of what they may see as birthright - male dominance. Women challenge men to let go of privilege so that they can begin a journey that leads them to greater wholeness. Men may not equate letting go of dominance with finding greater wholeness. If they refuse to see the connection, there is little hope of koinonia in the church. If they choose to listen to the women's challenge, they will undergo significant changes themselves.

Carol Pierce claims that when women and men begin to communicate in new ways, they engage their emotions more frequently.

The impact of collegiality where we strive to share power in the manner described so far, engages our emotions in new ways, more frequently, and for longer periods. This in itself feels different. In role stereotyping our emotions were assumed to be under control, . . . they were supposed to fluctuate very little. In the transition our emotions seem to go wild, with sharp peaks and valleys as we stumble and search for who we would like to be.⁴

fathers, wartime experiences, loneliness, fatherhood and
p Thus, when women and men come together on a basis of equal
worth, they encounter greater emotional interchange. This
may lead to a greater understanding of each other as people
and uncover some of the fears that each sex has had in
relation to the other and how those fears have precluded
change in the power structure. Mutual sharing also will lead
to mutual empowerment, where women and men find that they
communicate more openly and feel more rewarded by being
honest with each other. Empowerment often leads to increased
creativity and energy.

The Challenge to Change

In the church, women's groups have potential to focus on
women's pastoral issues. Each group may have a different
emphasis, such as women as single people, mothers, widows,
battered women, women who have lost children, etc. Groups
also need to deal with women's place in the church and world,
addressing the suffering servant role, passivity that puts
all needs before their own, and stereotypes of "good" and
"bad" women. Finally, women's groups, once they have served
to empower women, turn outward and challenge men in the
church to look at the patriarchal system that has led to
division and dominance-subordination.

Men too are called to look at the harm that this division
has caused, and begin to deal with it in ways that lead to a
relational way of living. To do so, they may have specific
groups dealing with childhood trauma, absent mothers or

disagreement is part of the process. Acknowledging that each person's perspective is of equal value and adopting an inclusive and emancipatory approach to people through power issues at work and at home.

If the vision for the church is to establish koinonia, an integrated and empowered community, then both women and men have a place in working toward healthy relationship, based on fairness and shared power. Carol Pierce, co-leader of an organisation called New Dynamics which deals with psychological and social issues faced by women and men, believes that mutuality occurs when women and men learn to relate in an open way. She lists what this communication entails:

- listen and ask questions

- re-interpret what helping means

- value connecting more personally to others, without competition

- acknowledge our power and other's

- be increasingly direct and non-protective

- deal with the quality of our introspective life⁵

This list allows communication to move away from value judgments being placed on behaviour: is this good/bad or right/wrong? Dualistic thinking changes to relational thinking where discussion can focus on feelings and value diversity of opinion.

Relinquishing blame and blaming is part of the process of building community. Listening openly, even if there is

disagreement is part of the process. Acknowledging that each person's perspective is of equal value and adopting an inclusive and emancipatory approach to people through language, understanding and mutual respect is part of the meaning of koinonia. Feeling connected without being dependent is the task women face when relating to men. Feeling connected without being dominant is the task men face when relating to women.

Koinonia will come about when both women and men have a desire for it to occur. People only move toward mutuality when they have a good reason to do so. If the dominant or subordinate group does not see a reason for change, then the hope of koinonia will be lost and the church will continue to decline. However, the challenge to change can come about for a variety of reasons. Women may find that they are not getting out of their lives and their faith that which they wish to find. They may "know" that there is more to life than the daily routine of service. They may challenge the system. Likewise, when those in power care about those who are not, they may feel a need to look at themselves differently if they perceive that their dominance is hurting others. They may also see that power is not something to protect as a personal possession that no one else can have, but it is something which, when shared, grows and expands, and leads to empowerment for many people. Another reason to change is to alleviate stress. Being dominant or subordinate takes much energy - "staying on top" or "just trying to survive" does not feel healthy over long

periods of time, and can lead to emotional and physical damage.

Still another reason to accept the challenge of change comes from knowledge that spiritual growth depends on honest, open communication and equitable relationships where all people are valued for themselves. Finally, a system of dominance and subordination does not allow anyone to be uniquely him- or herself. To develop individual integrity while still remaining in connection with others and God is possible in a relational system; it is not possible in a patriarchal system.

Conclusion

This vision of koinonia for the church is one that Christ had for the Jewish and Gentile peoples. Paul also had a vision for the early Christian communities in terms of new life.⁶ Koinonia involves new life, creativity, energy, and sharing the "good news" of God's presence.

The goal is for women and men to be balanced human beings in a connected, relational community. In this community, each person is responsible to learn how to love God, one another and the self. Caring and respect coinciding with interdependence and the differentiated self is the vision for the church's community. Men and women will need to start the journey in different places, but they can reach common ground when they come together in the church. Once this relational way of living is familiar, the new koinonia can reach out and offer many more people a safe place to come and communicate

meaningfully with God and with each other. The nature of the church will change, and women and men both will be "free in Christ."⁷

1. Pleron, *From the Old to the New: A Male/Female Continuum*. New Hampshire: New Dynamics, 1986. p. 17.

2. Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow? God-Talk in Worship: A New Approach to Feminist Theology*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1986. p. 15.

3. Pleron, pp. 1-26.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

6. For example, see *Ibid.*, p. 13.

7. See *Calvary*, p. 10.

ENDNOTES SIXTEEN: CONCLUSION - KINGDOM IN THE CHURCH

1. Pierce, Carol with Bill Page. A Male/Female Continuum: Paths to Colleagueship. New Hampshire: New Dynamics, 1986. p.17.

2. Wren, Brian. What Language Shall I Borrow? God-Talk in Worship: A Male Response to Feminist Theology. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990. p. 15. as shown in

3. Pierce, pp. 9-10. developing small groups where people

4. Ibid., p. 32. build support networks and explore mental,

5. Ibid., p. 26. and spiritual issues. As various small

6. For example, see Romans 13.ies and gain strength within

7. See Galatians 3.28. of each group may challenge members

of other groups to hear their stories and their needs. As

small support networks have developed into communities

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meant to them. Eventually members wish to turn outward and

share the good news of empowerment as it has happened to them

through group work. Collectively, different groups

share what they have learned; if leaders of the church can

hear the voices of empowerment and participate in this group

work, they will find what brings the spirit of members alive

and together. Mutual empowerment and support through a

deepened understanding of relationships based on equality

replaces the hierarchical, dominating power over the subordinated

(in this study, see page 100). Thus, the basis for

kingdom is formed. Eventually happens kingdom when a group

of empowered people with varying gifts, talents and interests

have learned how to listen to and respect each other, within

an egalitarian system of relationships. The case study with

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: CONCLUSION - KOINONIA IN THE CHURCH

Summary

This research has presented an alternative model for functioning within the church. The model, as shown in Diagram 1, is based on developing small groups where people work together to build support networks and explore mental, emotional, social and spiritual issues. As various small groups build their own identities and gain strength within themselves, the members of each group may challenge members of other groups to hear their stories and their needs. As small support networks who have developed into communities communicate with those outside the groups, they also share what positive aspects of belonging to such a system have meant to them. Eventually members wish to turn outward and share the good news of empowerment as it has happened to them through group work together. Collectively, different groups share what has empowered them; if leaders of the church can hear the voice of empowerment and participate in this group work, they will know what brings the spirit of members alive and together. Mutual empowerment and support through a deepened understanding of relationships based on equality replaces the dominants claiming power over the subordinates (in this study, men over women). Thus, the basis for koinonia is formed. Community becomes koinonia when a group of empowered people with varying gifts, talents and interests have learned how to listen to and respect each other, within an egalitarian system of functioning. The case study with

the group called Time Out illustrates concretely how group work can make an impact on the church. The women met for a period of two years to explore issues that arose in their lives and were significant to them. Through this meeting and discussion grew a network of friendship, which in turn provided support for women who had previously felt isolated and sometimes on the "fringe" of the church. Time for sharing and worship allowed women to communicate in increasingly more meaningful ways with each other, even when there was a sense of conflict behind some discussion. After the first year of work together, the women began to want to share their experiences with other women outside their particular group. Several also wanted men to have the opportunity to engage in the kind of supportive and worshipful network that they were experiencing themselves. This desire to share the experience of community while also continuing to build trust levels within their own group is the basis for developing other groups within the church. Consequently, another women's group was established and membership grew steadily as more and more women invited others to experience a new kind of community which they had not encountered in the church before.

Time Out and the second women's group has challenged that local parish church to encounter feminist thinking in terms of theology and worship. One bible study group responded by discussing and reacting emotionally to Phyllis Trible's Texts of Terror,¹ for several months. God was called "Mother" in the pulpit several times by the male minister. Worship

consisted of emancipatory language after the first year of by consciousness-raising, and many people in the church began to question their own understanding of traditional theology has during small group bible study or discussions with the not ministers. Some conflict resulted in the church over the of significant change occurring in liturgies and theological turn processing; however, the conflict was directly expressed for the most part, and talked through in a non-threatening way, sometimes ending in agreement to disagree about feminist a new issues arising in worship. ple and teaching that the oppressed

The results of the practical study along with the ful to contributions and corrections feminism brings to the study of history, theology and psychology show the impact group work has for building an alternative model of functioning within the church. Dispensing with the patriarchal model of domination and subordination, based on a hierarchal to a understanding of human worth is the key to renewing the 's vision for the church as emancipated community. o This ple research introduces a method for such renewal and develops the scheme for initiating the journey toward koinonia in a practical way. her or develop an alternative Christian

movement outwith the mainline institution.

The Path for the Future

This research has set forth the hypothesis that the western church needs to find an alternative way of functioning so that it can bring about reconciled and emancipated community within itself. To bring about reconciled community, This koinonia, the church must acknowledge first that its erment

patriarchal system of functioning has led to fragmentation by dividing men and women into dominant and subordinate classes. By doing so, the church, along with the rest of society, has developed stereotypes and gender-related roles which do not necessarily reflect talents, interest, concerns or needs of women and men. Further, and more significantly, the western mainline church has failed to be the prophetic voice proclaiming the good news of emancipated life which the New Testament called it to be. As an institution, the church has not followed Christ's example and teaching that the oppressed are to be freed and treated as equal, and the powerful to become humble and servantlike. Instead, church history and theology, including its worship practices and pastoral care, have reinforced division between women and men by claiming God's divine sanction and participation in ecclesial patriarchy. The division continues today, leading to a fragmented church full of unhealthy conflict about women's and men's roles. Indeed, an increasing number of people discredit the church's claim to authority based on dominant/subordinate models. These people often leave the church altogether or develop an alternative Christian movement outwith the mainline institution.

The only way to heal this wound is to confront the issues leading to fragmentation, followed by a time of listening and taking seriously the inner needs of both women and men. According to Paul in Romans 14, the goal of the church is to journey toward koinonia, through mutual empowerment. This and other passages give the church a vision of empowerment

and equality that it is meant to have.² To work toward that vision, church leaders must redefine the system of relationships and ways of communicating within those relationships within the church. Once koinonia begins to form, the community can reach out to those who are searching for meaning outside the community and even outside the church. As the women in Time Out claimed, they wanted to become "Fishers of Women." Likewise, koinonia can reach out to people by sharing the good news of freedom and empowerment that community has found through its work together. Thus, the church becomes capable of offering the news of grace to all people regardless of gender, race, age, or culture, as Christ commissioned it to do.³

Two paths lie in front of the church. The first is to continue functioning as it has since becoming institutionalised. To do so will continue to keep women and minority groups oppressed and white men in power. This path does not fulfil the vision Christ portrayed in his earthly work. In fact, it is the antithesis of his message. In addition, the church which does not empower, but oppresses will gain only members who are either interested in wielding their own power or who are too afraid to explore alternatives. The church will lose members who wish to develop a spiritual life that emphasises human diversity and individual worth amidst supportive community. This path leads to the death of the spiritual, Christ-centred church, and turns it into a place where patriarchy becomes idolatrous religion, sustained by those already in power.

The second path is more difficult for the church. However, the challenge that the church will encounter through its members and clergy adopting alternative ways of being in relationship, leads to a search for the vision of empowered community. Patriarchy ceases to be an idol and people engage each other in exploring personal and communal mental and spiritual issues, in an egalitarian way. Creativity is encouraged and individual gifts and talents can be realised, not on the basis of gender, but on the basis of being worthy human beings. Koinonia is formed, and begins to reach out to those who search for good news in their lives.

This is the path of life, which the church cannot afford to ignore any longer. The choice is upon its members and leadership now. May the path of life be the vision for the future.

ENDNOTES ONE: DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Tribble, Phyllis. Texts of Terror. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

2. See Romans 14. 19, 1 Corinthians 12. 4-26, 1 Corinthians 13, for a vision of the early church.

3. See Luke 24. 44-48, Matthew 28. 19-20. The first list comprises terms used with regard to issues. The second list comprises terms used with regard to elements of worship. The third list defines pastoral work in a general sense, but is combined with feminist understanding as developed in this thesis.

List 1: Words dealing with women's issues

FEMINISM

This is a term with a wide variety of definitions. Most people who define "feminism" are aware that theirs is not the exclusive meaning; the word takes on different nuances depending on the focus of the writer, researcher or speaker. Jane Mills, a linguist researcher, provides the background for the coining of the word "feminism" in Womanwords. The term dates from the 1850's; it originates from the Latin femina meaning "woman," or "the suckling one," or "the sucked one" (based on the role of motherhood).

"Feminism" was used in the last half of the 19th century to mean an expression or idiom peculiar to women, and the tendency in a man to have feminine habits (until "effeminacy" was coined). "Feminism," meaning having faith in women's abilities, advocating the rights of women, or prevalence of female influence, did not appear until the 1890's following

APPENDIX ONE: DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are a number of terms which I use frequently in this research which need to be defined in context. The first list of definitions clarify words used when dealing with women's issues. The second list comprises terms used with regard to elements of worship. The third list defines pastoral work in a general sense, but is combined with feminist understanding as developed in this thesis.

List I: Words dealing with women's issues

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the 1892 First International Woman's Congress in Paris which used the label "feministe." Before then, "womanism" had been briefly popular during the 1860's, 1870's and 1880's for the advocacy of the rights and achievements of women.

In 1933, The Oxford English Dictionary defined "feminism" as "The opinion and principles of the advocates of the achievements and claims of women: advocacy of women's rights." Webster gives a more materialistic definition. "The theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes," as well as the more generalised "organised activity on behalf of women's rights and interests; specifically, the 19th century and 20th century movement seeking to remove distinctions that discriminate against women."¹

The Feminist Dictionary (1985), attempts to solve the problem of pluralistic ideology which feminists agree is reality today. The dictionary provides as many as thirty definitions of the word from different women all over the world; it also includes entries under several headings which reflect different types of feminism, (Black, radical, socialist, marxist, lesbian, etc.)²

Gerda Lerner, in The Creation of Patriarchy, describes her perceptions of "feminism" as a term used frequently without specific reference to meaning.

Some of the currently used definitions are: (a) a doctrine of advocating social and political rights for women equal to those of men; (b) an organized movement for the attainment of these rights; (c) the assertion of the claims of women as a group and the body of theory women have created; (d) belief in the necessity of large-scale social

change in order to increase the power of women. Most persons using the term incorporate all the definitions from (a) to (c), but the necessity for basic social change in the system to which women demand equal access is not necessarily accepted by feminists.³

Lerner continues with the distinction between "women's rights" and "women's emancipation." She equates the woman's rights movement with the civil rights movement, where women want equal participation for women in the status quo. This is a reformist movement. She describes emancipation for women in terms of freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex; self-determination; and autonomy.

Freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex means freedom from biological and societal restrictions. Self-determination means being free to decide one's own destiny; being free to define one's social role; having the freedom to make decisions concerning one's body. Autonomy means earning one's own status, not being born into it or marrying it; it means financial independence; freedom to choose one's lifestyle and sexual preference--all of which implies a radical transformation of existing institutions and theories.⁴

Feminism can include both the concepts of equality and emancipation. However, making the distinction allows for the recognition that there are two aspects of the women's movement at work.

Thelma Jean Goodrich and co-authors, in Feminist Family Therapy: A Casebook, describes feminism as:

The philosophy which recognizes that men and women have different experiences of self, of other, of life, and that men's experience has been widely articulated while women's has been ignored or misrepresented. When we speak of feminism, we speak of the philosophy which recognizes that this society does not permit equality to women; on the contrary, it is structured so as to oppress women and

uplift men. This structure is called patriarchy. When we speak of feminism, we speak of a philosophy which recognizes that every aspect of public and private life carries the mark of patriarchal thinking and practice and is therefore a necessary focus for revision.⁵

Marilyn French, in Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals, outlines her view of what feminism is, without defining the word per se.

Feminism is the only serious, coherent, and universal philosophy that offers an alternative to patriarchal thinking and structures. Feminists believe in a few simple tenets. They believe that women are human beings, that the two sexes are (at least) equal in all significant ways, and that this equality must be publicly recognised. They believe that qualities traditionally associated with women--the feminine principle--are (at least) equal in value to those traditionally associated with men--the masculine principle--and that this equality must be publicly recognized... Finally, feminists believe that the personal is the political--that is, that the value structure of a culture is identical in both public and private areas, that what happens in the bedroom has everything to do with what happens in the boardroom, and vice versa, and that, mythology notwithstanding, at present the same sex is in control in both places.⁶

It is clear to see that definitions and the understanding of the task of feminism changes from author to author. Most feminists would accept "advocacy for women's equality" as a general definition, but would add their own experiences to make their own definition. These writers, amongst many others, also all describe the patriarchy from which many women wish to free themselves. This common approach to grappling with the word "feminism" is faithful to the contention that women's experience is diverse and cannot be "defined" in essence, in dictionary terms. This thesis approaches women's experience and expression through a

feminist lens, emphasising women's unique contribution to church and society, in addition to understanding that equality between the sexes is crucial for the health of both sexes. The research also presumes that self-knowledge and actualisation and the freedom to express these states of being through the changing of internal and external patriarchal assumptions is the key to women's health, and thus, the church's and society's health. I emphasise the emancipation element of feminism in this thesis, though, without a fundamental understanding of equal worth for women and men, emancipation cannot occur. "Equality" does not mean "sameness" in this context.

FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY

Out of the feminist movement has come an alternative approach to the psychology currently taught in most academic institutions. Feminist psychology challenges psychology by highlighting how the discipline concentrates on prescribed roles and neglects the person. The feminist approach challenges any therapy that rewards the female for unthinkingly carrying out her stereotyped domestic role which may actually be intensifying her distress in some cases. Indeed, feminist therapy espouses change rather than adjustment to a societal standard.

Drs. Toni Ann Laidlaw and Cheryl Malmo define feminist psychology in more reactive terms; for them, practising therapy from a feminist viewpoint means rejecting the

stereotyping, devaluing, and abuse of women; recognising how limiting and debilitating these things are, and understanding their damaging psychological effects on women.⁷

In other words, feminist psychology and its practice in therapy work to dispel the myth that "women's problems," such as depression, mood swings, "hysteria," and sometimes the alcoholism and drug abuse resulting from some of these things, are simply personal idiosyncrasies. Feminist therapists see these problems as symptoms of the sociopolitical situation in which women find themselves.⁸

Feminists call for reconstruction of terms and development of models that can better illuminate the contradictions and consequences at the point of interaction between gender, power, family and society.⁹

Feminist psychology and therapy is not considered to be primarily a set of techniques, but a political and philosophical viewpoint which produces a therapeutic methodology; this informs the questions the therapist asks and the understanding the therapist develops.¹⁰

Again, as stated earlier, feminists themselves are diverse, and they have varied perspectives on feminist psychotherapy. This diversity affects the research that they choose to do and the methods they use. Nonetheless, it is possible to pick out broad themes that feminist researchers are likely to agree with. First, they will adopt a woman's perspective, taking seriously women's viewpoints rather than inferring them from observation and experimentation. To understand women's own evaluations of their lives and experiences,

interviewing and discussion becomes a useful tool in therapy. Second, feminist therapists will critically evaluate assumptions underpinning research and a focus on power differentials in society, such as class, race, and gender positions in which women learn to function simultaneously. Learning the impact of these structural features is necessary to understand individual behaviour in a social context.¹¹

Feminist psychology has the potential to transform general psychological inquiry by presenting missing information about women;

Serious attention to the feminist critique would require the acceptance of different models of knowledge (as socially and temporally specific; as acknowledging subjectivity and values; in which the knower not only shapes but is an integral part of what is known); the development of different theories and methods (grounded in women's lives; more sensitive to diversity, variability and inconsistency; more reflexive); and the acknowledgment and analysis of power differentials central to social life (and the research process)--including the profoundly political role that psychology itself plays in maintaining such differentials.¹²

Feminist psychology in this paper is used in terms of Carl Rogers' client-centred approach, adapted to group work with a feminist foundation. The women in group work take primary responsibility for working through their own issues with the facilitator adding educational information as is appropriate.

FEMINIST THEOLOGY

The feminist movement also has affected theological thinking. Elisabeth Moltmann Wendel, in the preface to Letty Russell's Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective - A Theology,

claims that feminism is the sitz im leben out of which women contribute to liberation theology.¹³ Letty Russell later says that Christian feminists reflect the way in which theology can become more complete, as all people are encouraged to contribute to the meaning of faith from their own perspective, within a realm of equality and partnership.¹⁴ Mary Daly, in Beyond God the Father, takes a different stand. She claims that as the woman's movement begins to make an impact on the fabric of society, it will transform the world of patriarchy into something that has never existed before. Furthermore, for true emancipation for women to occur, beliefs and values that have held sway for thousands of years will be questioned as never before. "This revolution may well be also the greatest single hope for survival of spiritual consciousness on this planet."¹⁵ In Daly's eyes, the new society will have new images and symbols and a new way of talking about the Deity that speaks of women's experience. She hints that men too can find emancipation by moving out of the patriarchal structure. Daly believes that the feminist movement is very different from any other liberation movement. She describes black theologian's attempts to liberate God from whiteness as using the oppressor's weapon against himself, but to no avail. Liberation goes deeper: likewise,

It can legitimately be argued that a transsexual operation upon "God," changing "him" to "her," would be a far more profound alteration than a mere pigmentation change. However, to stop at this level of discourse would be a trivialization of the deep problem of human becoming in women.¹⁶

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Without women becoming themselves and confronting institutions and theories that keep them from doing so, any "revolution" would merely change who was in power, but not the power system. Only through new image, new expression and new forms of communication with the Deity may women become truly whole and powerful in themselves.

Feminist theology uses the criterion of women's experience, which has been almost entirely shut out of past theological reflection. As Rosemary Radford Ruether states,

The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive. Theologically speaking, whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption. This negative principle also implies the positive principle: what does promote the full humanity of women is of the Holy, it does reflect true relation to the divine, it is the true nature of things, the authentic message of redemption and the mission of redemptive community. But the meaning of this positive principle--namely, the full humanity of women--is not fully known. It has not existed in history.¹⁷

This research approaches theology from women's experience, through biblical interpretation as well as historical discovery of women's roles and stereotypes. The paper does not seek to ignore the patriarchal influence in biblical and historical text, but finds models of emancipation that patriarchy has not focused on in the past.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Language is one of the primary ways that human beings connect with each other. Sounds are arranged in a sequence, and people come to understand each other, agree or disagree, and possibly find solidarity. Everyone is affected both consciously and unconsciously by the language she or he uses.

The language people use often reflects the way that they think. When language excludes women, or indeed, keeps women in stereotyped roles, it is giving a very clear message to women about themselves. They are invisible. It is a strong political statement when the male is assumed to be the norm in any spoken or written language--he is the standard by which all others are measured, the "real" human being.

This bias in favour of the male is often referred to as "sexism" in language. Other terms include "androcentric" (male-centred), and "masculist," a label which brings out the male bias in language and culture. "In designating the world view, the order under which we live and in which language is integral, Cora Kaplan (1976) uses the term 'patriarchal.'"¹⁸ Although all of these terms share common features, "patriarchy" describes an institution in which human beings live, and "sexism" promotes particular manifestations of that order (see these terms below).

Furthermore, inclusive language does not deal with the issue of sex alone. It also challenges many other categories which have been established by the patriarchal system's value judgments. "On a human level, an effort to use more inclusive language makes us aware not only of our

sexism, but also of our racism, elitism, nationalism, classism, ageism, homophobia, and all our other prejudices."¹⁹ Using inclusive language is a serious commitment on the part of many people to speak and write words more responsibly and precisely, and to communicate more truthfully and sensitively. The degree of importance of language used sensitively can be seen in the following example.

Imagine a concelebrated liturgy in a church where the vast majority of worshippers are black. Imagine this liturgy concelebrated by five white male priests, gathered around the altar, wearing colourful vestments and proclaiming, "We are a holy race, a royal priesthood . . .".²⁰

What does a black girl see and experience at such a liturgy? White men proclaiming that they are a holy race? Are all blacks and all women unholy and unworthy?

Language conveys a belief-system, sometimes blatantly, sometimes subtly. Part of equality and emancipation for women is through the use of language in the world and in the church. Inclusive language in this thesis includes human and God-language. The term "God" is not used in a masculine

sense. Language can exist in societies where institutionalized patriarchy has been abolished. An example would be socialist countries with constitutions guaranteeing women absolute equality in public life but in which social and familial relations are nevertheless

PATRIARCHY

"Patriarchy," in its widest sense, means "the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general."²¹ It signifies that men

hold power in economic, social, and institutional terms, where women have little access to such power. It does NOT imply that women are completely powerless.

Paternalism is a behaviour which occurs within the institution of patriarchy. It describes the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights. The dominated exchange submission for protection, unpaid labor for maintenance.²²

The basis of paternalism is an unwritten contract of exchange between males and females.

SEXISM

"Sexism" is defined as the ideology of male supremacy and superiority, and all the beliefs that support and sustain it. Put simply, it is the discrimination on the basis of sex. This ideology often justified on religious, psychological, physical and social grounds, e.g., in all aspects of life.

Further, sexism and patriarchy mutually reinforce each other.

Clearly, sexism can exist in societies where institutionalized patriarchy has been abolished. An example would be socialist countries with constitutions guaranteeing women absolute equality in public life but in which social and familial relations are nevertheless sexist.²³

Lerner goes on to say by way of analogy that sexism stands in the same relation to paternalism as racism does to slavery. Both ways of thinking enable the dominant group to

after their temporary separation to explore new definitions of self and community together. The aim is not to begin a separatist group, but to bring small groups back together into communion. convince themselves that they were extending paternalistic good-will toward inferiors. Likewise, the inferiors become convinced that their protectors are the only authorities capable of fulfilling their needs. The difference is that slaves became a group based on solidarity, while women continue to remain separated from each other by sexism.²⁴

LITANY WOMEN-CHURCH

"Litany" is a form of prayer that requires response in some manner. Many litanies in the church are standardised, and representatives of the Women of the Church Coalition in the United States. In the meeting, women discussed the idea and reality of the ecclesia of women throughout history. The term that they chose for the particular historical movement and the organisation of women today was Women-Church.²⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether has developed the concept of Women-Church in a book of that title, describing what groups of Christian women are calling for to replace patriarchal thinking and practice within the church. She describes her purpose as constructing a church that is liberated from patriarchy.

Women-Church is not the focus of this paper, though elements of group work which include only female members do adopt a women-church-like approach to worship. However, this research goes beyond Women-Church because it incorporates therapeutic sharing time with a deliberate feminist psychological approach as well as attention to worship. Further, the women in the group were asked to rejoin men

after their temporary separation to explore new definitions of self and community together. The aim is not to begin a separatist group, but to bring small groups back together into koinonia.

List II: Elements of worship

LITANY

"Litany" is a form of prayer that requires response in some manner. Many litanies in the church are standardised, and a leader reads or cantor sings one part, while the congregation replies. Most litanies have an intercessory or petitioning nature, though some incorporate adoration or thanksgiving.

"Of all forms of public prayer, the litany is perhaps the most flexible and the most conducive, when used competently, to effective congregational participation."²⁶

LITURGY

"Liturgy" is derived from the Greek leitourgia, meaning an act of public service. It is composed of the two words ergon (work), and laos (people). In ancient Greece, a liturgy was a public work, something performed for the benefit of the city or the state.²⁷ Thus, liturgy is meant to be a work performed by the people for the benefit of others.

It is ideally a nurturing experience based on the presence of people who wish to be in relation with God and each other. In the New Testament, it is employed as an act of service or

ministry; in time it was confined in Christian terms to the idea of service to God. Finally, historically, because worship was regarded as the supreme service to God, it was applied to the eucharist.²⁸ In the present day, however, the Eastern Orthodox churches use "liturgy" as a synonym for eucharist, but the western churches use the term to apply to all forms of public worship of a participatory nature.

"Liturgy is the essential outward form through which a community of faith expresses its public worship."²⁹

Liturgy certainly is a humanly created form that is both powerful and pure. It is the result of a historical process of encounter between God and human communities gathered together in a particular, but ever-changing historical context. . . . to be precise, the liturgy claims that when work is being done, participants are engaging in communication with God.

In this thesis, I use "liturgy" in the sense of a specific act of worship, e.g. the eucharist or baptism. It is an act that is one part of a worship experience.

RITE

A "rite" is a formal act constituting a religious observance, such as sacrificial acts or the action of sharing the eucharist. Rites have a natural meaning which has been amplified and enriched by religious associations. Christian rites depend on a framework of four concepts: Symbolism: A symbol is an object which points beyond itself in such a way to express some further reality or occurrence or human

concept. The symbol often rests on historical or collective experiences which pre-date conscious recollection.

RITUAL

[Symbols] are born when they resonate at the deepest level with experiences or truths which are important for the corporate life and identity of a community. Operative symbols often maintain an integrating and stabilizing power for the community, but they may also lose this power, and wither away into mere poetic-symbolic metaphors.³⁰

processions or movement, in worship.)³²

Rites have a symbolic character whereby the natural object or action symbolises the divine, such as in the bread and wine of the eucharist.

Consecration: Rites dedicate to God the human situation, in its entirety or in certain aspects, and incorporate the human situation with the divine in relationship. To consecrate is to make sacred.

Repetition: Rites are representative actions, which are meant to invoke the presence of the divine in the present. They also commemorate the original sacred action, on a regular basis.

Remembrance: Acts of remembrance are part of rites; they preserve and transmit the tradition of the community and at the same time allow for sharing experiences. Shared experience sustains and renews the faith, and also allows it to grow.

There are rites of separation, transition, and incorporation; These acts are all related to crossing a threshold or moving through a life passage. They often are passages signified by weddings, funerals, baptisms, and the eucharist.³¹

RITUAL

A ritual refers to the prescribed form of words which constitute an act of worship. (It is not identical with ceremonial, which constitutes the specific actions, such as processions or movement, in worship.)³²

As all ritualization orders experience, so all ritualization communicates some sort of meaning, even if that meaning is as simple a message as 'I will act as is expected of me in this situation.' Formal rituals carry the core meanings of the social group performing them, the meanings which determine that group's world view.³³

Rituals are either adopted from an external authority or created by a group by their own authority. Worship in this research consisted of ritual which the women wrote and a sending forth from each meeting with blessing.

WORSHIP

"Worship" is not a word that can be narrowed down to simple definition. Entire volumes have been written on the elements of worship, or the different traditions of worship throughout history and across culture. The word comes from the Old English weorthschipe - literally, weorth (worthy) and -scipe (-ship). It signifies giving value or respect to someone.

Worship consists of the liturgy, the work of the people, which comes about through rites (specific acts of religious observance), rituals (words constituting rites), and ceremonials (actions involved in rites). Evelyn Underhill,

in her book *Worship*, defines the term itself as "the response of the creature to the Eternal; nor need we limit this definition to the human sphere."³⁴ It is a supernatural act in which human beings respond to the love of God, and through which people find their true basis of life.³⁵

James White would expand Underhill's definition to include a more mutual aspect of the word. He sees the relationship in worship as a giving and receiving, not necessarily in equal measure, but of being bound together. He explores the term "cult" as being more accurate for the concept behind the word "worship." "Cult" originates from the Latin colere, an agricultural term meaning to cultivate.

Both the French 'le culte' and the Italian 'il culto' preserve this Latin word as the usual term for worship. It is a rich term--far richer than the English word "worship"--for it catches the mutuality of responsibility, as between farmer and land or animals. If I do not feed and water my chickens, I know there will be no eggs; unless I weed my garden, there will be no vegetables. It is a relationship of mutual dependence, a lifelong engagement of caring for and looking after land or animals, a relationship that becomes almost a part of the bone marrow of farmers, especially those whose families have farmed for several generations on the same land . . . Unfortunately, the English language does not readily make the obvious connection between cultivate and worship that we find in the Romance languages.³⁶

Thus, Christian worship is a mutual communication with God, in community, in light of Jesus Christ's presence on earth, his death and resurrection.

List III: Issues concerning pastoral counselling and care

PASTORAL CARE

"Pastoral care is that aspect of the ministry of the Church which is concerned with the well-being of individuals and of communities.³⁷ Pastoral care incorporates forms of Christian proclamation or even moral guidance and support, either in religious or non-religious language. "...there is a hermeneutic of pastoral acts which reveals their religious significance, even when the agents themselves do not fully realize it."³⁸ There is a theological grounding behind pastoral caring which is based on the example of a loving God, as revealed in Christ. Pastoral care may be thought of in terms of furthering human growth within the context of Christian faith. Indeed, pastoral care "involves a ministry of reconciliation with both God and neighbour. This may be practised sacramentally . . . or informally through prayer and counselling."³⁹ This kind of caring is naturally associated with guidance in recognising and making decisions, and it is helpful for the care-giver to have some background understanding of human behaviour, both on an individual and group basis.

Healing is another element involved in the ministry of pastoral care. "For long periods it has figured little in most parishes apart from intercessions for the sick and occasional prayer with them."⁴⁰ Nowadays there will often be a more developed ministry which includes visiting, special rites such as anointing with oil or the sacrament of communion. Healing itself is concerned primarily with the

renewal of faith and the recovery of human wholeness in connection with faith.

1. Webster's Dictionary. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 1934.

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PASTORAL THEOLOGY

"Pastoral theology" (the theology of pastoral care), is the foundation behind caring action; its basis is the sense that it is an academic study of the church's action in its own life and towards society, in response to the activity of God.

"Pastoral theology is at present an unstable concept, reflecting a variety of churchly traditions, theological movements and secular influences."⁴¹ Pastoral theology pays close attention to foundational human experiences, such as birth, love, loss and death. It also takes into account the communal character of life as it is influenced by social, political, and economic conditions. The theological focus takes these experiences and contexts and explores them in terms of living within a Christ-centred vision.

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APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY FROM TIME OUT

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1. Please describe what has been the most significant learning experience you've had since Time-Out began. (This experience can be outside of the group context and is not limited to our discussion topics.)

My eyes have been opened to the number of people (my experience both in and out of Time-out is of women) on whose lives Christian faith and belief (of all denominations) have a very significant influence. This gives a feeling of belonging, of fellowship. I also learned that one's needs have to be expressed to be understood. (W)

To listen attentively to others and in doing so gained knowledge of myself. Generally, I've read a greater range of books, literature than I would have done, making me aware of myself and women and our situations. (Ja)

That I desire "space" too. Not only should I consider the needs of my family and my career - but my own needs too. (F)

Learning that so much can be achieved by talking a problem through with someone, or in a group situation, instead of bottling it up and letting resentment build up inside. I find now this often provides a starting point for something positive or just helps me to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel - even if it seems a very long tunnel! (Ja)

Realising that most (if not all) other women in our culture share needs for space and self-esteem. Learning that I don't have to assume blame for everything that happens. (A)

This must be the importance for women to learn to know their own worth and build up self-esteem. (R)

2. What is the most meaningful aspect of Time-Out for you and why?

APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY FROM TIME OUT

This is hard! Sharing time is very important for me because until Time Out started and even for a while after it started, I found (and still find) it difficult to be "me" but I think it helps to gather myself together before going home. I
1. Please describe what has been the most significant learning experience you've had since Time-Out began. (This experience can be outside of the group context and is not limited to our discussion topics.) or friendship of a depth I have rarely experienced before. (A)

My eyes have been opened to the number of people (my experience both in and out of Time-out is of women) on whose lives Christian faith and belief (of all denominations) have a very significant influence. This gives a feeling of belonging, of fellowship. I also learned that one's needs have to be expressed to be understood. (M)

Being able to "open up" to people who listen and really care about me - sharing joy and disappointments in a meaningful way. To listen attentively to others and in doing so gained knowledge of myself. Generally, I've read a greater range of books, literature than I would have done, making me aware of myself and women and our situations. (Ja)

judgements being made on what is said and knowing that what is said will go no further - acceptance and trust. (A)
That I desire "space" too. Not only should I consider the needs of my family and my career - but my own needs too. (F)

Learning that so much can be achieved by talking a problem through with someone, or in a group situation, instead of bottling it up and letting resentment build up inside. I find now this often provides a starting point for something positive or just helps me to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel - even if it seems a very long tunnel! (Je strikes you).

Realising that most (if not all) other women in our culture share needs for space and self-esteem. Learning that I don't have to assume blame for everything that happens. (A)

On its own: A closely bonded group of women who support each other. This must be the importance for women to learn to know their own worth and build up self-esteem. (R) the group is about - a discussion group formed to discuss women's issues, relating in particular to pastoral care of women. (F)

A women's group which discusses feelings, rights, fears on a personal and wider level, where worship is needed
2. What is the most meaningful aspect of Time-Out for you and why?

This is hard! Sharing time is very important for me because until Time Out started and even for a while after it started, I found (and still find) it difficult to be "me" but I think I'm getting there. I also find the worship very meaningful. It helps me gather myself together before going home. I cannot adequately describe my feelings at Time Out worship but it is very special. (R)

Being able to rely on each other for friendship of a depth I have rarely experienced before. (A)

The sharing it with each other in total confidence, the support and the non-judgmental acceptance of whatever you say. This has become my release valve. (Je)

Being able to "open up" to people who listen and really care about me - sharing joy and disappointments in a meaningful way - not "surface" friendships. (F)

The freedom to speak without worrying about judgements being made on what is said and knowing that what is said will go no further - acceptance and trust. (M)

3. How would you describe the community called Time-Out, on its own, and within the context of the wider church community? (Interpret this question in any way that it strikes you).

As a candle shedding light and ever burning brighter (M)

On its own: A closely bonded group of women who support each other - almost a "select" group with a special relationship. Wider church community: When asked what the group is about - a discussion group formed to debate women's issues, relating in particular to pastoral care of women. (F)

A women's group which discusses feminine rights, feelings, fears on a personal and wider level, where worship is needed and welcomed. (Ja)

Own - close, caring, sharing supportive sisterhood. Wider - special friends within a circle of friends. Hopefully T/O can become a tool to enable others to improve their lot. (Je)

Always saw church as a community of care and worship. A group of women, all with great strengths, all with some weakness, able to admit fears and share hopes. Exclusive in the sense that we have bared so much in confidence but we've all taken attitudes from T-O into our wider lives. Within the church community, perhaps it's a beginning. Can we build for others. (A)

Time-Out - a group of women who care about each other and also about all women and issues concerning them. (R)

4. Has your understanding of the definition of "church" changed since Time-Out began? If so, please describe your understanding "before" and "after." If not, what is your current understanding?

The "church" before - a place for worship. Now it is still a place for worship but it is now a much warmer experience knowing friends and not just acquaintances are around. (R)

Before - viewed it a rather narrow way; relating largely to activities within the congregation. After - worldwide fellowship with men and women. (M)

"Church" used to form the majority of my relationship with God. Now I see "normal" worship in the church as only a part of the story. Church has become the shallower side of worship and even within that the depth can vary. Church has taken a bit of a back seat with the growing importance to me of T/O. (Je)

Church was where I prayed to God, attended services, gained from listening to sermons, met friends/acquaintances; now it's where there is belonging, looking for a "Time-Out" face, sharing a smile, catching an eye enhances the worship. The context of sermon is important and after I hear what I need to hear, talking to God comes easier and brings peace. (Ja)

Yes, a little. I see it as a less formal, less rigid organisation. I was relieved to find my own ideas confirmed

by others. It is like a large "family," especially now that I look out for other members of Time-Out. (F)

Always saw church as a community of care and worship. Feeling strengthened since T-O began. Now also seeing it as a political means of change. (A)

5. Please describe the significance, if any, of the worship time we have together. Do you think that the group would be "in the same place" without worship? What emotions do you feel during the worship, if any? What is helpful to you during that time, if anything? What don't you like, if anything?

More intense sharing. Healing, strengthening, knitting together some of the things we've said that evening. No - not "in the same place" - seals our time together, underlines that we don't cope alone - we have God and each other. Emotions - peace, warmth, strength, being loved. Tinged with sadness that worship usually marks the end of a T-O session. Don't like milk cartons. (A)

For me, the significance of worship joins us as a Christian group of women with belief in God and not purely a women's discussion group. I don't think the group would have been "in the same place" without worship. Emotions felt during worship have varied. Sometimes happiness, sometimes sadness - always peace. I find the quietness helpful and I DO like the candle. (R)

I like being involved in more personal prayer rather than standard prayers in normal services. I like the atmosphere created, particularly by candlelight. Feelings during worship - sense of sharing, warmth. Afterwards - I like the feeling of being re-charged; problems seem less insurmountable. (F)

It is important, a prayerful, sometimes teary time always necessary after an emotional discussion. The candle and silent prayer brings solace, peace - a healing time, even with a 'Fresh n' low' carton. Candles and worship have become synonymous as have hugs. I think worship is very important to the group and has given Time-Out greater

meaning. It had me realise that worship can be anywhere for anytime. (Ja)

The significance of worship time is that we are all as one - we come together with very different problems, struggling on very different journeys, but there is one centre in worship. It is very often a time of healing (or beginning of it) and is a release of pent-up emotion. Emotions - sorrow, joy, determination, fear, despair, fulfilment, exhilaration. Helpful - peace, stillness, candles, togetherness, yet often a time for healing on an individual level too. HUGS are intrinsic part of the worship. On the few occasions there has been no worship, I have felt that I have been cheated. (Je)

7. What would your life be like without any kind of worship
Worship - like the hymn "Just as I am." God loves and accepts us with all imperfections. . . and this gives us all an inner strength. I feel - surrounding warmth and love during worship and also vulnerability - almost like a child - exposed. Worship gives a bigger dimension to our discussions and allows things to be put in perspective. (M)

6. Please define "worship" as you understand it, in your own words.

A direct conversation with God. (M)

A time of two-way communication with God, feeding me a) in other groups usually as a person, b) in T/O as a woman. It is a time of beginning the healing process, of opening up, and of handing over to God when I feel I can no longer cope on my own. Worship needs peace and stillness, and more and more for me it needs candles. Thinking about it just now, I realise it also needs not to be alone - 2 or more are needed! If I sat and prayed alone, I wouldn't consider that "worship," but I'm not sure why. Some of the most meaningful worship events of recent times for me have been when we have said a prayer together (just us 2 alone) either holding hands, or with our arms around each other. (Je)

Worship to me is talking to God in prayer, aloud and in silence, taking part in church services and being part of a congregation, singing hymns, communion is important especially when administered by you and [the senior minister]. The whole is worship. (Ja)

Giving thanks and praise to God mostly - but also asking for help, strength. (F)

Worship for me is time to express love of God, to give thanks to God, to ask for God's help for others needs and for your own needs and for forgiveness of all I do that's wrong (R)

Communicating with God, acknowledging and praising God's place in the world and in my life. Thanking God for what we have and asking help in growing. (A)

7. What would your life be like without any kind of worship at all? (How does (any) worship affect your life, in your own words?)

Barren, arid. Worship enables me to get things in perspective and deal better. Enjoy singing (badly) familiar tunes. 9.30 communion and 6.30 service especially significant in creating frame of mind to keep going more peacefully. Have such a lot - want to praise and acknowledge God. (A)

I can't imagine life without worship. Worship is an important aspect of my life. It keeps me closer to God. Worship helps me remember that God cares about us all. (R)

Missing something - it fills some kind of a gap, and helps me to keep going when things are tough. It gives me calm, inner peace. (F)

My life would be without direction, alone, superficial, without depth. Worship gives strength, reassurance. (M)

Unbearable. Worship helps me at times to retain my sanity, and to recharge my batteries. It reminds me that there is a higher being who is with me, even when I feel totally alone. (Je)

I can't quite imagine that as worship has been important to me for a long time and has become stronger since Time-Out! It brings me peace and strength. (Ja)

8. Has your image of God changed since Time-Out began? If yes, how so - who is God to you? If no, what is your image - who is God to you? How does this image affect your life, if at all?

Yes, God is closer and I have gained the ability to pray, talk to God whenever I need to, in peace, in anger - anytime. God is everywhere and feeling closer to God has affirmed my faith. (Ja)

Yes, my relationship with God has relaxed. God now is more of a friend that I can talk to at any time, and informally. I can now rant and rave at God if something seems unjust. Also someone to whom I can hand over my burden. My strengthened/increased faith has become very important to me, and I now feel I am living my faith. (Je)

Not really - always saw him as an all-powerful force for good, almost like a tolerant, loving parent. Effect on my life - gives it meaning, acts as an "anchor." (F)

God is closer, the mist is clearing. God is a presence everywhere. (M)

My image of God has not changed much. I never believed in a male dominating God although now I do give more thought to God as SHE. (R)

Yes - not exclusively male terms any more! God is in other people, small gestures, loving looks, grace. Yes - affects my life in that I see God in so many situations. Doesn't mean I don't occasionally yell 'Where are you when I need you?' (A)

9. Describe how you've changed since Time-Out began, if at all. Is your opinion of yourself different? Is your outlook on life different? Are your family relationships different? Are your friendships different? (If you answer yes to any of

the sub-questions, please expand and be as specific as possible, overleaf.)

I think my opinion of myself is different - I understand now what influence various individuals have had on my self-esteem and it is easier to deal with lack of confidence, shyness and I hope makes me more patient, tolerant and determined not to affect my own children similarly but also to try to give the positive attributes these individuals gave to me. I think I take more time to listen in family relationships. (M)

Self-esteem has increased, and I am more assertive. I think I am a little more fatalistic in outlook. Friendships - I am more aware that some friendships are largely "surface" - but I also realise that this is due in part to lack of time. Outside of Time Out the friends I really care about and I don't get time to talk 'properly.' (F)

More thoughtful of others, I hope. Less self-centred. Opinion of self - giving myself more status in my own eyes, refusing to be a fall-guy/scapegoat in some situations. Family - yes different but not necessarily easier. Realise by comparison, I have a lot of support from [husband] so guilt creeps in when I assert my needs. Want fervently to nurture [daughters'] self-esteem as they grow but have to ensure that it's not at the expense of mine. Relationships with wider family - less willing to be walked on, more likely to help others (esp. females) to assert themselves. e.g. I wrote to one niece with job trouble reinforcing it was HER decision, not grandad's or her parents' and that we would love her whatever she did and certainly respect her if she decided she had made a mistake. Friendship - outside T-O - seem shallower with few exceptions. Different basis - less honest exchange over the years. More selective about spending time - quality not quantity. Friendships - within T-O - deeper more important relationships. Some newer. Made me realise what strengths other women have. (A)

I think I have become stronger, more assertive, less able to accept what I feel to be wrong, more aware of women's issues. My opinion of myself has improved a bit - it must have to realise that I've become stronger, etc. My outlook on life has changed. I think I am now more prepared to accept change and not necessarily continue in the status quo. Family relationships (with [husband]) were bad when Time-Out started. I would say things are worse now probably because I'm being more assertive and not giving in quite so much. Also because he doesn't know what we discuss. I think he's probably jealous of my new friendships. (with children) much as before. Friendships outwith Time Out group, although on the surface haven't changed, I feel they are now very

shallow. I don't think I have EVER experienced friendship before like I have now with Time-Out. (R)

I have gained in friendships, most certainly in faith. I am more aware of women's needs and have become assertive and feel I have gained in self-esteem although that's sometimes "knocked-back." I have greater self-esteem and have become more assertive but since working full time have lost own space, but I know that is important, will regain it. That's my aim. I don't feel selfish about that. I would like to be able to be self-indulgent occasionally but have not been able to do that. My children's need are first. Yet, my outlook on life has changed; it has widened as my relationship with God has become closer, I feel stronger, or less weak. Family relationships - with my husband, it has had troughs during the period since Time Out began, most of them low, but I can cope with them better. Friendships - Time Out friends are very important and mean a great deal. I have learned to listen to other friends more carefully and I have been able to suggest possible suggestions [woman's wording] to help them. Casual friends/acquaintances are shallow and through Time Out I have become fully aware of the difference. My real friends are those in Time Out with the exception of perhaps 3 other people I have known for many years. (Ja)

I have grown as a person and I have become a woman. Self-confidence and self-esteem have increased beyond measure. I'm more assertive, more deeply concerned about other people, more aware of women's issues in particular, and other aspects of life in general (environment, discrimination, etc.). Self - I'm able to feel good about myself. I count on an equal footing with everyone else. I MATTER. I realise I do things well on the whole, and am able to say that I don't do something very well without feeling a failure. When I feel guilty, I sit down and work out if this is justifiable, and if I decide not, I stop myself from feeling this way. Life - I now SCHEDULE time for myself. This must be the biggest achievement. I don't always get it, but as a mother this is inevitable and I feel I can handle this now. I now see life as a journey and accept the ups and downs as part of that journey. I still have difficulty recognising and accepting the "rest periods." Family - There was initially a struggle to get the family to accept my taking time, needing space, doing things for ME and ON MY OWN - it's not always easy to hold out when 9 year old eyes are pleading to come with you. We have all learned "give and take" - she now accepts that sometime I need to be by myself, and I realise there are times when she needs to be with me, so sometimes I go alone and sometimes we go together. I'm attempting to talk about things with the girls when the going gets tough, having previously learned to do that with [her husband], and seeing the positive results. It's not easy to refrain from the old way, of rising to the bait, but when it happens now I'm CONSCIOUS of doing it. The family have in general become

very supportive of my needs and I try to encourage them to take what they need as individuals too. I feel better able to cope with normal family life as a result of having my own time and space. Friendships - I never envisaged having as deep and meaningful friendships with other women as we have in T/O. Friendship of WOMEN is ultra important. I've come to realise that many long-standing friendships are rather shallow - some I hope may deepen in the light of what I've learned, others I accept will never change. I feel as if I have more to bring to a friendship now, even at the level of casual meeting. Women's reactions to MY reaction when they tell of actually doing something are an eye-opener. I try to affirm what they are doing and they expect disapproval. (Je)

10. Describe yourself.

A woman, a Christian. Busy, harassed. Often floundering, trying to cope. Tends to try to fix things for others, doesn't always accept help. Easily hurt. Bad-tempered. Getting thinner. Family well-read. Politically left of centre. Open to new ideas. Often tired. Likes company. (A)

I am first and foremost a WOMAN. Then I am principally a wife and mother. (?in which order - I'm not certain?) I am a traveller on a journey - I have come a long way, but am still searching, exploring and discovering. As a result of this journeying I am better able to deal with things and to work things out for myself. (Je)

"5-foot", slightly "overweight" as in 8 stone, 46 and feeling it, round-shouldered -- busy, tired, could be better organised around the home; the time to read, walk, listen to music and find space is important. (Ja)

A person who tries hard at life, who perhaps sets unrealistic targets so far as the perfect wife, perfect mother, perfect housekeeper goes - and then constantly feels a failure when these standards are not achieved. On the positive side, I'm friendly, try to be helpful, and try to considered others. I'm fun-loving and hopefully sometimes, fun to be with. (F)

I'm dependable, trustworthy, honest. A hard-worker. I think I'm kind and compassionate. (R)

Smallish, getting thinner with effort! A little less haphazard. Happier - NOTICE, all positive! (M)

Sleep, rest, space - then to recapture a little of my old, carefree ways. To be loved, to love. To long wait so that
11. Describe your needs. To be a good wife, mother, teacher. To help people - especially those in dire need.
(F)

Time to think and be quiet, have security and someone to love and make secure. (M)

Sleep, rest, space, reduced pressure, at work in particular.
(F)

I need space, peace, affection, friendship, Time Out in equal proportions; at the moment, money! (Ja)

Time and space for myself, support and love of women, worship in a variety of forms, time for family life, and time as a couple with my husband. Increasingly, I feel a need to use the tools I have learned to benefit others. (Je)

I get frustrated when I can't change people's attitudes to SPACE. Time to decide what real priorities are. Freedom from guilt when the priorities don't include domestic crap. To be needed by and important for other T-O members. Sleep. these days! More hours in the day, for me. Work which would stretch my brain more and the confidence to look for it. (A)

Inability to organise everything. Starting things and not seeing them through. (A)

12. Describe your desires.

My difficulty in being spontaneous in friendship until they are long-standing when I then find it easy without thought. My desires and needs are one and the same. I desire a happy home for my children - happiness. (Ja)

Other people's expectations. At work, I'm expected to be Peace of mind for me and my family and friends. Less stress and pain for the women I care about. Would love to cope better with my bad temper. Would love to relate better to [her daughter] - feel our mutual resentment right now will be harder to dispel as time goes on. (A)

To be able to communicate (?by example?) some of what I have gained to other women, and at the same time continue the exploration of ourselves with my sisters in T/O. Also to bring up my daughters in a way that will communicate to them the importance of what I have learned at an EARLIER age. I would dearly love them to go out into the world feeling that they matter and being conscious of themselves as women. (Je)

Lack of time; on occasions (to be honest) the responsibilities of family life - to be in a position to get Sleep, rest, space - then to recapture a little of my old, carefree ways. To be loved, to love. To lose weight so that I can like myself better. To be a good wife, mother, teacher. To help people - especially those in dire need. (F)

14. Describe what you appreciate in your friends. To be confident without being over-bearing. To be good at sending cards, letters, when I think of doing it. To stop thinking that people will have forgotten who I am, when I met them before. To learn to accept compliments, etc. without always qualifying them. (M)

Peace, happiness, kindness. I would like to live in a home without animosity. (R)

Really LISTENING - backing me in whatever I want to do. 13. Describe your frustrations. Just "being there" when I need them. (F)

I get frustrated when I can't change people's attitudes to sexual discrimination, racism and bigotry. I get frustrated when my opinions are treated as stupid. I get frustrated that I can't have friends to the house that I'd like to invite. (R)

Concern for each other. 2-way sounding out of worries. Inability to organise everything. Starting things and not seeing them through. (A)

My difficulty in being spontaneous in friendship until they are long-standing when I then find it easy without thought. (M)

Other people's expectations. At work, I'm expected to be totally committed to my job, and put my family second. At home, I am compelled to consider the immediate needs of my family - so can't do my work at home as often as I need to. Also I'm too tired to do it. I can never please my mother - she says I spend too much time on housework - not enough on the kids, then expects me to give up the limited time I have with the children at weekends, to spend more time alone with her. WHAT ABOUT ME!???? (F)

My ability to keep going. My ability to laugh at myself. My Lack of communication with my husband, lack of earning power are the main ones. (Ja)

I've learned to cope with the recent past personal marital

Lack of time; on occasions (to be honest) the responsibilities of family life - to be in a position to act on the spur of the moment would be nice. People who don't - or WON'T? - take the "new me" seriously. (Je)

This I still find difficult! Loyalty. I like other people. (M)

14. Describe what you appreciate in your friends.

Perhaps my epitaph will be "well, she did keep trying." I do try to think of others, think of myself, do more, count to BEING THERE, HUGS, not showing any judgment, just giving support. The opportunity to talk things through, which very often helps me to sort things out in a way I can't do just by trying to think them through myself. (Je)

Previously have said 'I can't' to. Having something to offer other women. Confidence to cope with life in general and Caring, confidences being kept, conversation. Sharing, sense of humour, hugs. (Ja)

Really LISTENING - backing me in whatever I want to do. Offering constructive suggestion. Just "being there" when I need them. (F)

Absolute confidence, confidentiality, reliability. Hugs, physical contact expressing such care. Humour, laughter, tears. (A)

Not patronisingly, but if their NEED is great, they must be able to rely on us. Would gladly look at health issues for women, other political areas of feminism. Worship Concern for each other. 2-way sounding out of worries, happinesses, sadnesses, interests and discussion. Comradeship. (M)

I appreciate being able to trust friends and being able to talk in complete confidence. I appreciate friends caring about my domestic situation. I appreciate support from friends. I appreciate a sense of humour. I appreciate hugs. (R)

Have something to offer. Also in the everyday world of "normal" life, to be able to act and behave in a way that makes people aware of what I believe - it would be lovely to feel that I was making some significant contribution, however tiny, to improving the lot of others, and women in

15. Describe what you appreciate in yourself.

(Blank). (R) I have to think about this. The brain is a bit tired. (M)

My ability to keep going. My ability to laugh at myself. My ability to make people laugh. My capacity for caring. (F) to God. Continue to support and care for Time Out. To continue to work through the list made at the beginning of I've learned to cope with the recent past personal marital

difficulties. I have gained in confidence at work, I have and am supportive of my friends. I feel concern for them. I have a good relationship (mostly) with my children. (Ja)

This I still find difficult! Loyalty. I like other people. (M)

Perhaps my epitaph will be "well, she did keep trying." I do TRY to think of others, think of myself, do more, count to ten before exploding. (A)

Ability and willingness to tackle challenges I would previously have said 'I can't' to. Having something to offer other women. Confidence to cope with life in general and hopefully in BEING A WOMAN. (Je)

16. Describe what you would like to work on from now on (overleaf).

Hard to say. Probably tied up with feeling that I am already lucky so would like the group to keep supporting R and Ja, in particular. Not patronisingly, but if their NEED is most, they must be able to rely on us. Would gladly look at health issues for women, other political areas of feminism. Worship together, reading and discussing what each other discovers. Keep plugging away at self-esteem - underpins so much else and lack of it undermines so much else. Fun/social time too - we ALL need to be silly sometimes. (A)

Learning more from within the depths of myself. Also having the opportunity to apply some of it to the wider world - I've applied to train as a counsellor for Childline, feeling that I have something to offer. Also in the everyday world of "normal" life, to be able to act and behave in a way that makes people aware of what I believe - it would be lovely to feel that I was making some significant contribution, however tiny, to improving the lot of others, and women in particular. (Je)

Dear L, I will have to think about this. The brain is a bit tired. (M)

Women's issues, more worship to gain in relationship with and to God. Continue to support and care for Time Out. To continue to work through the list made at the beginning of Time Out, to discuss women's power, space, self-esteem, whole

anger, how to handle anger, guilt, affirmation of faith creating a wholeness for the group and each of us as individuals. (Ja)

Assertiveness/confidence building. Continued support - as before. Compose our own prayer, etc. Discussion of women's issues not yet explored. Attempt to start our own small women's support groups. (F)

Don't really know. Discussion as before. Perhaps trying to put to use what we've learned for the benefit of other women. (R)

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