

The definition of Spirituality for this project: how one’s understanding of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit shapes the way one lives in relationship with God. Spirituality of each person is an individual matter, but in general, it is an understanding of how one relates in body, mind and spirit with God, and how one responds in thoughts, actions, plans, hopes, desires, in daily life to that relationship.

Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1 – 7:29

- General scholarship agrees that the Sermon on the Mount was a composite of Jesus’ teaching and the author’s construction.
- This teaching discourse, as in the entire gospel of Matthew, was meant to strengthen, support, encourage, and prepare the Christian community for life together in the kingdom of God.
- “The beatitudes are written in unconditional performative language. They do not merely describe something that already is, but bring into being the reality they declare.”¹
- The use of two verb tenses in each beatitude indicates the status of Christians in this world, and in the kingdom of God, which is future oriented.
- Jesus makes blessed those who are named in these nine beatitudes.
- Living together in community, as pastor and people, we are informed by Jesus’ words and at the same time blessed as we respond to the indications they bring.
- We do not use them as requirements for inclusion in the kingdom, but as a response to the One whose Word has taught us to live.
- How the community lives in response to this teaching from the Sermon is important.
- “The community that hears itself pronounced blessed by its Lord does not remain passive, but acts in accord with the coming kingdom.”²
- The blessings: the poor in spirit, those that mourn, the meek, those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those persecuted for righteousness sake, and those who are persecuted as were the prophets on account of Christ.
- The ‘rewards’ that follow each of the blessings are not of this world.
- They “are not this worldly practical realities, but elements of the eschatological hopes of Israel.”³
- As such, they speak also to us who are adopted by God through baptismal covenant, and who follow Christ.
- The promises: the kingdom of heaven, comfort when mourning, inheriting the earth, to be filled when hungering and thirsting for righteousness, mercy, seeing God, being called children of God, inheriting the kingdom of heaven, and having reward in heaven, give hope to those who hear these blessings.
- The teaching of Jesus, his Word produces that of which he speaks.
- The blessings are followed with two pronouncements from Jesus to the disciples.
- They and we are charged to be salt and light on a city on a hill.
- As disciples, they and we, bring the Word of Jesus into the world.
- There is an admonition to live with greater righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees.
- A better response for disciples would be to hear the teaching of Jesus and live in response to it.
- Jesus refers to the law, ‘you have heard it said’, and then restates the law ‘but I say to you.’
- These antitheses include ways to deal with our emotions and the subsequent behavior and problems we cause ourselves.
- Our behavior reflects how we understand God and what we understand the kingdom of God to be.
- If we follow Jesus and live in Christian communities, there are acceptable modes of conduct.
- “Jesus advances no less a claim that that keeping the law or doing the will of God is always, in essence, an exercise in love”⁴
- In a radical way, Jesus taught: “the manner in which religious obligations are fulfilled is more important than the fulfillment itself.”⁵
- Charitable giving, prayer, and fasting were spiritual practices of the religious people to whom Jesus was teaching. Jesus taught them to continue these practices.
- The teaching of Jesus regards all displays of personal goodness or personal deprivation for the sake of showing others a superiority of pious behavior as worthless.
- The emphasis is on doing the Word, and on one’s motive for acting on these words.
- The teaching of Jesus elicited no questions, no comments, no arguments, just astonishment.
- “What prompts apprehensive astonishment in the listeners is not so much the content of the teaching as the authority with which Jesus declares God’s purpose for their lives.”⁶
- The teaching is radical and impossible to be observed literally in its entirety, but it lays the foundation for the life of discipleship.
- Each time we prepare to proclaim the good news from the Sermon on the Mount we seek the truth in these words of Jesus.
- We find courage and hope in this sermon for our lives to be faithful to the call from God as ordained pastors in his church
- The text brings hope for the future and consolation for the present.
- Good news for disciples called to love and serve God and our neighbors.
- Good news for pastors who are called to serve in the ministry of Word and sacrament.

¹ M. Eugene Boring, *Matthew*, author of the Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections on the Gospel of Matthew. Leander E. Keck, convener and New Testament Editor, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Vol. VIII*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 177.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid. 178.
⁴ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (Philadelphia: Fortsee Press, 1988), 66.
⁵ Douglas R. Hare and James Luther Hayes, ed. Paul Actemeier, *New Testament Ed. Interpretation: Matthew* (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1993), 63.
⁶ Ibid. 87.

The Witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- The witness of his life and writings are an example of a strong spiritual life for pastors. His life and theology are consistent with teaching in The Sermon on the Mount.
- Bonhoeffer was a man to whom extraordinary events led to an extraordinary response of maintaining faithfulness to Christ, particularly his understanding of the spiritual life and his understanding of how that spiritual life is sustained and nurtured in the midst of those extraordinary events.
 - His theology is broadly understood as presupposing the existence of God, as known through Christ, and how God, the transcendent ‘Thou’, is in relationship with humankind.
 - “The Christian person achieves his true nature when God does not confront him as Thou, but ‘enters into’ him as I.”¹
 - In acknowledging this relationship with the other and the divine ‘Thou’, in supporting and nurturing this relationship, one gives spiritual care to others.
 - Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the spiritual life was that one would be involved in living the truths of the gospel of Christ, whatever the cost
 - In 1935, Bonhoeffer returned to Germany to exercise spiritual care of future pastors by leading a seminary for the Confessing Church.
 - One can see in the community life of the seminary an expression of spiritual care of all involved.
 - This life would be lived as a wholly committed response to the call from Christ.
 - Attention and care of one’s spirit and the way in which one understands the Triune God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, are essential for living a life of discipleship.
 - Bonhoeffer nurtured his own spiritual life as he supported and nurtured others.
 - Bonhoeffer gave us the understanding that the grace of God comes at a costly price when following Christ as his disciples.
 - “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”²
 - Bonhoeffer’s response to costly grace was to live his life in response to the gift of forgiveness, grace, and presence of Christ.
 - Bonhoeffer taught that we must read the Word of God, hear it, respond to Jesus’ invitation, and do what is in response to that which is presented in our lives.
 - This will include suffering, shame, sacrifice, and walking with Christ, not as we define the terms or the situations, but as Christ will give them to us.
 - This assurance of Christ for us and with us is the most profound spiritual care one can know.
 - To read Bonhoeffer’s sureness and clarity in proclaiming Christ present in times of trial is to understand his writing as spiritual care.
 - Bonhoeffer makes it clear that disciples do not have a choice of being salt or light, but that when disciples respond to Christ’s call, they become indispensable for the world, because of the mission of Christ.
 - “Flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him.”
 - “So long as we refuse to love and serve our brother and make him an object of contempt and let him harbour a grudge against me or the congregation, our worship and sacrifice will be unacceptable to God.”³
 - The actions and sins of individuals reflect in the community, therefore, Bonhoeffer looks to the community as well as the individual to follow Christ.
 - Bonhoeffer’s words are stark, hear the words of Christ, make them priority in our lives, and simply get on with it. [commenting on the astonishment of the hearers at the end of Jesus’ teaching.
 - The Sermon on the Mount became for him, and us, the epitome of Christ’s teaching, and of care for the spiritual life.
 - In writing *Spiritual Care*, Bonhoeffer believed that first and foremost, any conversations regarding spiritual care must involve God.
 - Spiritual care would be needed when a person had retreated from God and the Christian community.
 - This role of spiritual care by the pastor comes because of the pastoral office.
 - To offer the grace of God, through pastor care, without an understanding of the life commitment would be to offer cheap grace.
 - “Forgiveness without obedience leads one to a facile dealing with grace.”⁴
 - Bonhoeffer made several suppositions about the pastor who will give spiritual care.
 - The pastor must be grounded in prayer.
 - The pastor must know the Cross of Christ and its demands.
 - The pastor must remain silent regarding the confession and the counsel that is offered.
 - Congregations must trust that the pastor stands grounded in Christ through the discipline of prayer, Word and Sacrament.
 - Pastor and congregation must trust each other enough so that spiritual care can be given and received.
 - Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the need for spiritual care is that “the core of the ‘problem’ is flight from the Word of God.”⁵
 - Faithfulness of the pastor would require then, that the pastor submit oneself to “The simplest things of Scripture, prayer, confession, and to concrete obedience on one definite matter. And to allow himself to be led forward step by step by Christ. The life of the pastor competes itself in reading, meditation, prayer, and struggle.”⁶
 - “If the church is the body of Christ, then its servants are indissolubly bound to one another.”⁷
 - “In the long run, human relationships are the most important thing in life...God uses us in his dealings with others. Everything else is very close to hubris.”⁸

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Communion of Saints*, trans. William Cullen Boyce (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 37.
² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Gift of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fisher, with revision by Ingrid Brock (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 44-2.
³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Imprisonment of the Christian Life: A Bible Study on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. R. H. Fisher, 2nd ed., reprinted with permission of the Macmillan Company from *The Cross of Discipleship* (New York: National Student Christian Federation, 1964), 32.
⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*, trans. Guntram Schellen (Macon, GA: Paternoster Press, 1985), 31.
⁵ Ibid., 33.
⁶ Ibid., 68-69.
⁷ Ibid., 66.
⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. SCM Press Ltd. (London: The Folio Society, 2002) 343.

SPIRITUAL CARE AND NURTURE OF PASTORS

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Spiritual care and support of pastors

- **Called by God, living in our Baptismal covenant and serving God through Word and Sacrament ministry, pastors are firmly rooted in the Kingdom of God, yet living life every day with pressures and opposition to God’s kingdom**
- **The questions arises how shall pastors be nourished and cared for, in order to remain strong in God’s grace and God’s strength?**
- **Caring for the spiritual life of pastors, and nourishing them, will be beneficial to those congregations in which the pastors serve Christ and those they lead.**
- **Recommendations will be made with a foundational promise of the Word of God, as we know it from scripture.**
- **Recommendations will be made keeping in mind the Christ-centered theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the witness he gave to the church and the world, particularly through his life, death, books and papers.**
- **Recommendations will be made using information from the comments of the thirty-seven surveys returned from synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**
- **Spiritual care is not care for a mental condition or physical conditions. It may affect all areas of one’s life, but spiritual care is primarily care of one’s spirit.**
- **Spiritual care is that which relates to God in a most intimate way, because in Baptism, we are imbued with the Holy Spirit.**
- **“Spiritual care is invitational; it is not prescriptive. It is anchored in discoveries which are evoked, rather than in doctrines which are imposed...The primary material with which one works is always the living call that is heard, accepted, followed, and resisted in the individual’s life.”¹**
- **Being alone and being in fellowship with others will balance one’s life, as both are expressions of being united with Christ.**

Conclusions drawn from the project including information from the returned surveys:

- Spiritual care is important for the pastor as each responds to their call into ministry with Christ.**
- Spiritual care should be grounded in the Word.**
- Christ provided for care of our spiritual life in his teaching.**
- There are witnesses of those who live spiritual lives grounded in Christ.**
- Pastors are in need of spiritual care.**
- Spiritual care and nurture of pastors are important functions from the Bishop’s office, (based on ELCA constitution only.)**
- Most Synods offer some spiritual care to their pastors**
- Not all Synods offer the same type of spiritual care, or have a variety of programs for spiritual care.**
- Some Synods reported having nothing in place for Spiritual Care for pastors.**
- Further study and intentionality is needed to provide spiritual care and nurture for all pastors who want and need this care.**

Further study on this topic may include:

- *Personal interviews with pastors.
- *Interviews with seminaries about courses offered on care of spiritual life.
- *Full-Communion Partners and other ecumenical bodies regarding sharing of information, programs, and facilities.
- *Pension and Insurance Board statistics and programs.

Information on Spiritual Care and Nurture from Thirty-Seven Synods Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

- *The foundations for life as an ordained minister of Word and sacrament are grounded in God, as known through the ministry and mission of Christ, and sustained by the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.*
- When we are called by God to serve God and our brothers and sisters, we are to serve God faithfully, through our ministry in the Church.
- Idealism, perfection, and wholeness seem to be the hallmarks of character that are required and expected of pastors. Indeed, when called by God, one would expect the characteristics of God to be exhibited and lived without question by ministers of Word and Sacrament.
- Yet, realizing the truth of Luther’s ‘*simul justus et peccator*’, pastors know the reality of life in the world and in the reign of God
- **Bonhoeffer:** “Whoever takes the office seriously must cry out under the burden. One has to make visits, listen to and bear the needs and sorrow of many people” one has to carry on numerous conversations with those one accompanies on life’s way and always with those who encroach on one’s time.”¹
- “Everyone who cares for the soul needs a person who will care for his or her soul.”¹
- “Each synod, in partnership with the churchwide organization, shall bear primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church in its territory. a. Provide for the pastoral care of congregations, ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers in the synod.”¹
- In Article S8.12 the bishop “primary responsibility for providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ordained ministers, and its other rostered leaders.”¹
- The **Sermon on the Mount** as understood from Luther and Bonhoeffer, indicates that we are the salt of the earth, not will be, or need to be, but we are the salt of the earth and the light of the city on the hill.
- Therefore when pastors are in need of ‘replenishing their salt, or getting ‘oil for their lamp’, where and to whom shall they go?
- The questions on the survey were asked to gain an understanding about how spiritual care is given, who will give spiritual care, and where the pastor will go to receive such care.
- The responses from the survey will be used to make recommendations for use in the synods.
- Such recommendations would help to support and nurture the spiritual life of pastors, thereby strengthening the Church for its mission, the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- The **primary question** is about the **presence of specific programs that address the spiritual life, nurture, and care, of rostered clergy in the synod.**
- The **intent** of the question was to **obtain information on how pastors come into relationship with people who will provide for nurture and care of their spirituality.**
- “The load is too heavy to bear alone. We need someone who will help us use our powers in ministry correctly, someone who will defend us against our own lack of faith.”¹

¹ Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*, 67.
¹ Ibid., 66.
¹ ELCA Constitution, Paragraph 4.01
¹ Upper Susquehanna Synod Constitution, S8.12.b.
¹ Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*, 67.

Synods, ELCA	Number	Percent
Surveys sent out	65	100
Surveys returned	37	57
Information below	Based on	Returned surveys only
Responses by:	28	76
Bishops:	9	24
Bishop’s Designee:		
Program for Spiritual Care and/or Nurture	23	62
Returned brochures describing program	6	16
Synods having no program	14	38
Help available for stress	21	57
Nothing available	14	38
No answer to this question	2	5
Need for ongoing nurture of spiritual health:		
Yes:		89
No:		0
No answer to given:		11
Lists of Spiritual Directors	3	8
Lists of Retreat Houses	2	5
Family System Retreats	1	3
Programs on Health, Wholeness, Spirituality	2	5
Required Designated Pastor	3	8
Colleague Text Study,	9	24
FCTE	8	22
Personal Counseling	4	11
Employee Assistance	2	5
Education Debt Reduction	1	3
Help with Salary Negotiation	2	5
Sabbatical Policy	5	14
Bishop / Staff vists each year	4	11

Recommendations that may help to improve the Spiritual Life of Pastors.

Recommendations to be done by individuals in private.

- ☞ Daily Devotions
 - ☞ Almsgiving
 - Scripture Reading
 - Meditation
 - Prayer
 - Intercessions
 - ☞ Fasting
 - ☞ Sabbath Keeping
 - ☞ Journaling
 - ☞ Sabbatical Leave
- ☞ To Keep in mind: have a particular time and place which one can return to daily for reading, meditation and prayer, if possible. The use of candles, music, water, indoors or outdoors may help center one for an atmosphere of communication with God.

Recommendations that can be done in community with colleagues, a community to listen, hear, reflect, console and rejoice with each other.

- ☞ Devotions
- ☞ Pericope Study
- ☞ Lectio Divina
- ☞ Meditation
- ☞ Baptismal Remembrance
- ☞ Specific text or book study
- ☞ Theological Reflections
- ☞ Intercessions
- ☞ Specific Areas of Spiritual
- ☞ Spiritual Retreats Care Together
- ☞ Specific Issues of the Churches
- ☞ Special Education Opportunities
- ☞ Prayer
- ☞ Confession
- ☞ Worship
- ☞ Absolution

Recommendations to the Synods (or other Judicatory body)

- † Task Force appointed to study spiritual care needs in synod or area.
- † Consider having Spiritual Directors on staff or refer Spiritual Directors to Pastors who make known their need for Spiritual Care.
- † Spiritual Retreats twice a year for the purpose of Spiritual Care and enrichment.
 - Consideration of the Church Year is important when scheduling.
 - Consideration of programming which would have a variety of spiritual enrichment events, options, or tracks.
 - Publicize the program in advance in order to eliminate confusion over the presentation due to personality and spiritual needs.
 - Components could include:
 - Worship
 - Private Confession and Absolution
 - Proclamation of the gospel
 - Word and Sacrament
 - Small Group Gatherings
 - Reflection Time
 - Bible Study
 - Meditation
 - Physical Activity
 - Private Spiritual Counseling available
 - Group study of issues pertaining to spiritual life.
 - Rest and relaxation
 - Locations might include:
 - Outdoor Camps
 - Seminary Campuses
 - Academic Campuses
 - Private Retreat Centers
 - Church related facilities
- † Provide for Spiritual Days Apart for pastors who cannot get away overnight or for several days.
- † Provide a reference list for Retreat Houses, Spiritual Directors, and Spiritual Counseling in order to have information available in times of crisis.
- † Provide Boundary Training with on-going updates.
- † Convocations for specific issues dealing with the call to ministry, Word, and a healthy spiritual life.
- † First Call Theological Education (FCTE) - expanded beyond the first three years of ordination. This would be invitational, never prescriptive.
- † Sabbatical Leave. Include this in the initial call document with each pastor.
- † Ask each pastor to have:
 - A pastor for himself/herself and the family
 - A Continuing Education Plan
 - A Spiritual Care Plan
 - Boundary Training at regular intervals
- † Provide for an annual interview by the Bishop or staff at the pastor’s church and home.
- † Provide screening for Pastors who ask for help with psychological and spiritual needs.
 - Refer those in need to Retreat Houses for spiritual counseling and if necessary, psychological counseling.
- † **Recommendations** to include the listing of Retreat Houses sponsored by the Churchwide Unit.
- † Consider having Initiatives for the Spiritual Care and Nurture of Pastors.
 - The Spiritual life of clergy will reflect in the life of the church.
- † Consider having a Churchwide system for screening pastors for spiritual and psychological help when they are in crisis.
 - (This could be modeled after the Retreat House in Germany.)
 - Consider having such programs shared by large geographic areas and divisions of the church and ecumenical units.
 - Consider using agencies of the church engaged in the work of the health of pastors, such as social service agencies, pension boards, insurance boards.