

**PAPER IN CONSIDERATION OF ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE UNITED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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## **A Winding Journey With and Towards God**

My journey of faith and sense of inner call really begins with my parents' lack of faith. My father is a proud believer in what he can "taste, touch, hear, see, and smell." He is a paradigm of the Enlightenment if ever there was one. My mother is an agnostic in the best sense of the word. She would tell you that she believes in God though she wouldn't be able to say anything about what kind of God she believes in. She thinks God is there, but where "there" is located remains a mystery for her. She is kind and generous in her lack of belief. So...in mixing those two things together, you come up with utterly nothing; which is precisely what I was told about God, faith, and religion as a child. It was a mystery to me, something that was never discussed. Christian faith was not thought of negatively, because it was not thought of at all.

Growing up, this void of faith was combined with boredom and some questionable characters I called close friends, who would eventually introduce me to marijuana and binge drinking. The party scene in my small central Illinois town was active, and I was a big part of it for a couple of years. Eventually smoking pot led me to other drugs and soon, I was interested in getting high on whatever I could. I wasn't a bad kid necessarily; I was just bored and did what all of my friends were doing. And to be honest, it was a lot of fun and quite pleasurable. My drug use came to define me and it led me to do other things that I now regret, like stealing and lying to my family and friends.

My first positive encounter with Christian faith came through a United Methodist summer camp that I started attending for pure amusement and fun. The camp was outdoor-orientated where all the meals were cooked on open fires, we slept out under the stars in meadows surrounded by beautiful pine trees, and we did fun things like ride

horses and go “creeking.” The fact that it was Christian camp was entirely lost on me, and even though I heard about this man named Jesus and was surrounded by kind and thoughtful Christian people, Christianity still didn’t mean anything to me.

That is, until one night at camp between sophomore and junior year of high school: I had a powerful spiritual experience that has come to define me, and one that still profoundly impacts me. One night after worship, I witnessed a number of camp counselors laughing for no apparent reason. There was a profound sense of joy about them. I was very intrigued by what I was watching and I asked the camp nurse what was going on. She told me to go ask the pastor and so I started speaking with him. “What is going on here?” I said in a curious tone. He read me the story of Acts 2 and simply said, “This is what is happening here, do you want to see for yourself?” I looked around at everyone laughing and I determined that yes, in fact, I did want to see what all the fuss was really about. I repeated a prayer that he spoke to me, which wasn’t the sinner’s prayer; it was more of an invitation: “God, I invite you into my heart and mind, whatever that may mean, to be God, Holy Spirit breathe your life in me.” I really meant that prayer, and in that moment something like electricity came over my whole body and surged through me from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. Not only that, but the guilt, shame, depression, and all the things that I’d been carrying with me suddenly melted away, and I was met by a profound, inexplicable joy and glory and love which overwhelmed me entirely. I suddenly knew that God was real, and felt that God was so close to me, closer than my own thoughts. It was really real!

From this moment at 15 I have not been the same. I have been passionately pursuing God with my whole life since that moment. The last two years of high school

were pretty rough, as all of my previous “friends” abandoned me, and the Christian kids at my school didn’t initially believe me, so I was left friendless for about a year.

For this reason, I was thankful to leave my small town and attend Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, in the Fall of 2005. I had a wonderful, Christian bubble-type experience there, which was great for me and allowed me to grow in many ways. I learned a lot too, not only about theology (my major) but also about my personal strengths and weaknesses, and my ability to think critically and in nuanced ways about what I was learning. At Trinity, many of my professors consistently encouraged me to pursue pastoral ministry and we often had conversations about faith, culture, and how those two fit (or didn’t fit) together. Living overseas in Sydney, Australia my senior year was especially critical. It gave me a helpful distance from everything I previously knew, and allowed me to discern God’s call in a new cultural landscape, which provided me with a sense of neutrality. I came to see and unpack how deeply rooted my own sense of Christian faith was rooted in an unhealthy nationalist story of America. This new awareness was a great gift for me.

After Trinity, I decided to attend Duke Divinity School as I felt a strong call to the local church. I found myself identifying with a theology of grace and wanted to be deeply challenged intellectually about my own Christian framework. I had also attended a United Methodist Church while in high school and had a solid relationship with that community and its minister, who encouraged me to pursue formal pastoral ministry through divinity school.

I loved Duke and its nuanced community of academic rigor, which helped me further refine my sense of call and solidify my desire to ordained ministry in the local church. My call to ministry became more than merely intellectual when I began serving

as the Associate Minister of a small rural church during my time at Duke. I sensed that I possessed gifts for this special work, but I was deeply passionate about it, too. I sincerely cared for the people I was serving and they in turn allowed me to flourish and grow. The congregation I served, Warren's Grove UMC, was a gracious place that allowed me to use the church as a theological laboratory where I could try out all the new things I was learning and figure out what worked and what didn't in a safe way. The Senior Minister and I, through our theological experiments, were able to triple the size of the church in three years, from 40 people, to 130 in worship on Sunday.

After seminary, I started working at LaSalle Street Church, an inter-denominational, progressive, emergent church in the heart of the city as their director of Youth Ministry. I came to LaSalle because they were a model church of what racial reconciliation could look like in real ecclesial community. At LaSalle, I learned a lot about an approach to pastoral ministry that is theologically generous, open, and seeks to serve those on the margins of our society.

It was also at LaSalle that I discerned a more specific call to parish ministry as a minister, rather than someone who would specialize in youth ministry alone as a vocation. That is the main reason I accepted the position that I currently hold as Assistant Minister at Glencoe Union Church. GUC provides me with the opportunity to practice the entire scope of parish ministry work: pastoral care, preaching, outreach, worship leadership, youth ministry, and, of course, various administrative tasks. It is at Glencoe Union that I have gained a new confidence in my own pastoral authority that springs from God's calling and my gifts, which I now am now able to exercise in a wider

capacity. So, it is in my current ministry context that I now know, not merely sense, that I am called to a life of authorized parish ministry, for which I am deeply grateful.<sup>1</sup>

### **Statements of Faith**

I find the UCC statement of faith to be a source of great comfort and joy. As I read other statements of faith from our Christian tradition such as the Nicene Creed, I find myself at times confident and at times less so with my ability to affirm these mysterious declarations. In my history and polity course at Chicago Theological Seminary, professor John Thomas told the class, “We hold these statements as testimonies, not tests.” For this I am deeply grateful, for even as I now attempt to re-articulate my thoughts on God, I find myself holding these words lightly, with a sense of generosity, and a recognition that these words and my beliefs never in fact capture who God is; but instead, I hope they point in the direction of God and make the journey, with and towards God, a bit smoother.

I affirm<sup>2</sup> that there is one God who is the creator and sustainer of all that exists. I affirm that God is unending and has never not been. I believe that God has made known to us God’s desire to be deeply known and connected to us and to our world, as the things and people that God has made. I affirm that God has worked and is working throughout all of history to bring about this radically intimate relationship with all of creation and that I am a very small part of that work. In this work, God has simultaneously revealed God’s self as Triune through the Creator, Christ, and Holy

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<sup>1</sup> *Book of Worship United Church of Christ*, (Cleveland, OH; 1986), 407.

<sup>2</sup> Here, I am stating positively what I in fact do believe and affirm, as opposed to merely saying what I do not believe

Spirit, these eternally existent three being one God. This Trinity is how I understand God.

I believe that in some ways we are like God, in that we share in God's image and belong to God. And yet humanity is totally unlike God. I affirm that God is mysterious and transcendent. At the same time, I believe that God's presence is closer to me than my own skin, as Rilke says:

We become so accustomed to you,  
we no longer look up  
when your shadow falls over the book we are reading  
and makes it glow. For all things  
sing you: at times  
we just hear them more clearly.<sup>3</sup>

I believe that God the Son took on flesh and was born into our world.<sup>4</sup> I believe in the incarnation of God through the person of Jesus. The incarnation is God becoming radically intimate with us by becoming fully human, yet always remaining fully divine. I hold these dual natures of Christ in tension through faith. I believe that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as a human being brings into the very being of God all that it is to be human, including suffering and death. I affirm the resurrection<sup>5</sup> and the Easter hope that I now share in the resurrection, too.<sup>6</sup> Christ reconciles us back to God and heals us. Christ shows us the character of God, but more than that, Jesus shows us the kind of life that is fully inspired by a relationship with God—a life marked by love, hospitality, simplicity, generosity, wisdom, forgiveness, sacrifice, compassion, and of

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<sup>3</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Book of Hours*, trans. Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996) 1, 45

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:1-20, New Revised Standard Version

<sup>5</sup> John 20:1-18 NRSV

<sup>6</sup> Romans 6:5-8 NRSV

course, joy. Lastly, and on a more personal note, Jesus is the face of God for me. When I close my eyes in prayer, I imagine his presence before me. He is the person to whom my prayers are directed and the one who I know as an intimate friend.<sup>7</sup>

I affirm that the Holy Spirit is active in the world. I believe when I see the fruit of the Spirit that I experience the presence of the Spirit, even if unacknowledged. I affirm that the Holy Spirit operates in our lives as a teacher, comforter, advocate and moral guide.<sup>8</sup> I recognize the movement of the Spirit in the lives of our sisters and brothers of the past who have passed down to us our understanding of the faith by Scripture, experience, reason, and tradition. In this way, I believe through the Spirit I am connected to those who have gone before me.

### **Sacraments**

I believe sacraments are outward symbols of an inward and spiritual grace.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, I understand the sacrament of Holy Communion to be a means of grace. The means of grace are avenues by which God's grace can flow to us for our sanctification and journey as disciples of Christ. Here I am influenced by John Wesley who defined the means of grace in this way: "By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained by God ... to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."<sup>10</sup> Grace helps us on our journey with and towards God.

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<sup>7</sup> John 15:15 NRSV

<sup>8</sup> John 14:15-26 NRSV

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2008), 843.

<sup>10</sup> Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," §2.1, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. by Albert Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 160.

I also understand the elements to be in some way presenting the active and living presence of Christ. I do affirm that in some mysterious and mystical way, Christ is actually present in the elements of bread and wine. Therefore, because Christ is present in and through the elements, as we consume the bread and wine, we also consume Christ's characteristics—specifically, a capacity for faith, hope, and love. In other words, by participating in the Eucharistic feast, our flesh becomes capable of incorruption and we gain the hope of a bodily resurrection.<sup>11</sup> Thus, as a gathered community around the Table we remember Jesus's life and atoning work, we are united to one another, and we are given a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

The benefits of the Eucharist should cause another reaction: gratitude. This point becomes clear when we realize the meaning of the word Eucharist, which comes from the Greek noun εὐχαριστία, meaning literally “thanksgiving.” For the early Church father Irenaeus, another dimension of the Eucharist is as a sacrificial act of gratitude before the Lord.<sup>12</sup> He understands the Eucharist as an offering, indeed, the first offering of all creation and of the new covenant.<sup>13</sup> This means that we offer to God the gifts God has given us. One should notice how this places all the emphasis on God: God creates us, saves us, redeems us, and now gives us the gift of the Eucharist to offer back to God's self. Thus, the Eucharist is a gift given by God so that we may have a fitting communion with God.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Maurice Wiles & Mark Santer, eds., *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 183-187; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies IV 17.5-18.6*, 187.

<sup>12</sup> Wiles & Santer, 184.

<sup>13</sup> Wiles & Santer, 183-184.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 39.

Baptism is a means of grace whereby the child enters into the body of Christ, that is, the Church through an encounter with the risen Christ. Baptism does not equate to salvation, but the benefits of infant baptism are threefold: it marks the beginning of the life of faith in the Church, we receive the regenerating work of the Spirit, namely grace, and we remember that God is one who does something for us, preveniently giving us grace before we respond. The third point is the kicker for me pastorally; baptism is something that God does for us, and not something we do for God. In that way, it is an act of trust, an act of faith—faith not only in God, but also in the larger church community that will nurture, educate, and encourage children into a mature and lasting faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

### **The Bible**

My position on the Bible is that it is a holy, alive, and active book. The Bible is a sacred text. As we say in public worship, the Bible is the Word of God; it is powerful for teaching and preaching in worship. The Bible is not the only revelation of God, but is a principle way in which the church throughout time has sought to discern God’s will. I believe that “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”<sup>15</sup> I interpret “inspired” to mean that God was actively involved in the writing of Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit. This doesn’t mean that God actually sat down one day and wrote the Bible or that it just magically fell from heaven (*I have had Confirmation students swear that this is what happened*). It means that God gave people the words to use and the inspiration to write.

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<sup>15</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 NRSV.

Particular people wrote the Bible in particular places with a particular purpose in mind. In this way, the Bible is both a fully human and fully divine book. I believe that when I read the Old and New Testaments I can hear the word of God.<sup>16</sup>

The Bible presents a normative framework for how Christians should think and live. It tells a story that Christians should learn to adopt as their story, that is, that we learn to see ourselves in it and through it. The Bible gives our lives meaning and identity. It acts as a means of grace for the Church and individual Christians when we use it in worship or private devotionals. The Bible has authority in discerning a problematic situation or question. Of course, tradition, experience, and reason all matter for a thoughtful and prudent outcome on an exegetical, moral, or social issue.

My approach to biblical interpretation is to start by reading the passage repeatedly, preferably in a number of different translations. I read what comes before and after the passage to give myself more context. I like to sit with the passage for at least a day, if possible. Sometimes I will journal on the passage, sometimes I will *Lectio* on the passage, and other times I will consult a trusted friend or colleague about their insights if time permits. A close reading of the passage at the beginning of the process is invaluable. At this stage, I am trying to find the main point or something that seems odd, a problem that is left unresolved, or an interesting question that will provoke further reflection.

I affirm not all parts of Scripture are to be interpreted in the same way using the same approach; Biblical interpretation is an art, not a science. Hence, the whole of Scripture is not meant to be taken literally or allegorically. When doing serious exegesis,

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<sup>16</sup> *Book of Worship United Church of Christ*, 407.

there are a number of questions and categories that I try to consider while writing a sermon or Bible study, such as: What is the function of this passage in its context? What are the boundaries of the passage—are there any translation problems? What are the key words and what do they mean—does the passage quote or reference other parts of Scripture or other sources?

### **The Church**

The nature of the church is to be missional. To speak plainly, faith must be put into action. The church is the body of Christ in the world, it is a community of disciples who live a life of love of God and neighbor, who practice forgiveness and repentance, who care equally about Jesus and justice, and who seek to be creative about how faith gets contextualized in their unique locality. Therefore, to be a Christian is to do mission work; the two cannot be separated, as David Bosch states, “This dimension [mission work] of the Christian faith is not an optional extra: Christianity is missionary by its very nature, or it denies its very *raison d’etre*.”<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, what the mission of the church should be depends on where we look in the Bible. Mission work in Matthew’s Gospel is about making disciples. The primary responsibility of any true disciple is to announce the wonderful mystery that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Gospel of Luke, not unlike that of Matthew, also has an important text for mission work; Luke 4:16-21, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the

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<sup>17</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 9.

year of the Lord's favor.”<sup>18</sup> Luke’s Gospel accentuates the work of the Holy Spirit in the church’s call to seek after justice and freedom from oppression. Through the Spirit alone we are able to be faithful witnesses to Christ’s life and resurrection. Hence, the work in and importance of missions is not what humans can do, but what the Holy Spirit does. It helps us to remember that it is not about us and that we are ultimately dependent upon God, and one another.

Therefore, being the Church also means being a community. Ideally this community is a place to grow, ask questions, sit with doubt, be comforted, develop friendships, share a meal, and learn not merely about “religious” issues, but about how best to live out our faith in meaningful action around contemporary issues of justice. In this way, the nature of the church is to embrace its calling to be a critical presence, whereby we stand in solidarity with those in their deepest needs.<sup>19</sup> Being the church means to have a prophetic voice, whereby we name the injustices of our society and seek to live differently, always believing in hope, that the way things are is not the way things have to be. Last, but certainly not least, the church should be open and welcoming to all people regardless of their faith background,<sup>20</sup> especially the marginalized and those who have little power or voice in our society.

### **Who Influences Me?**

My theological imagination has been influenced by too many folks to name, but a few that stand out would be Stephan Chapman, Julian of Norwich, Walter Brueggemann, John Wesley, John Calvin, N.T. Wright, Alasdair MacIntyre, Eugene

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 4:18 NRSV

<sup>19</sup> James Vijayakumar, “Mission and Mission Enabling when Critical Presence is Needed,” Global Ministries, [https://www.globalministries.org/college\\_of\\_mission\\_the\\_great\\_commission\\_and\\_god](https://www.globalministries.org/college_of_mission_the_great_commission_and_god)

<sup>20</sup> *Book of Worship United Church of Christ*, 408

Peterson, Brian McLaren, C.S. Lewis, Thomas Aquinas, Ellen Davis, Kenda Dean, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Kate Bowler, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It's difficult for me to separate out how each voice has contributed to my theological and philosophical development but it's fair to say that parts of each of these beloved voices has contributed to my own voice and helped to me think deeper and wider about the love of God and my own spiritual journey. As such, my theological approach is inherently generous.

My ethics are influenced by Stanley Hauerwas, Marilynne Robinson, Chris Rice, William Barber and the Poor People's Campaign, Martin Luther King, and the writings and poetry of Wendell Barry. They have taught me to see things through the lens of peace, nonviolence, and reconciliation, and taught me to notice and be with those on the margins, and live simply with a thoughtfulness about our created world as a sacred gift on which everything else depends.

In learning to prepare a sermon, Richard Lischer, Charles Campbell, and Tom Long have all greatly impacted my own preaching style and the way in which I think about what makes for a good sermon. Perhaps more importantly, I have greatly enjoyed and been impacted by the sermons of Laura Truax, Rob Bell, Sam Wells, and Greg Moore – who have all in one way or another shaped the language I use, my homiletical imagination, and my style in preaching.

In my day to day life currently, I find myself listening to the "Pray As I Go" app, reading the UCC devotional email, the Enneagram Institute's *EnneaThought* for the day, and Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation.

### **Understanding UCC Identity**

In the Old Testament, God makes a covenant with Abraham, which extends to his ancestors who eventually become the people of Israel. The covenant is the primary way

in which God chooses to establish a relationship with humanity. In my confirmation classes, when teaching on covenant for the first time, I help students understand the concept by saying that the covenant is like a contract, where both sides agree to certain terms (the idea of a contract, while not a perfect metaphor, makes sense to an 8<sup>th</sup> grader). In the contract, God agrees to bless us. We agree to be faithful and love God with our whole heart. We enter into covenant with God through faith, just as Abraham did. Covenant not only establishes our relationship with God, but it also forms our relationships with one another. The traditional marks of the covenant are the sacraments themselves.<sup>21</sup> Through baptism we learn, remember and celebrate that we are in fact beloved and belong to God. Through Holy Communion, we remember Christ's work, celebrate our new covenant with joy and proclaim a future of new beginnings with freedom from oppression for all creation.

Today the covenant marks us as a gathered community that is called the Church. As this gathered community, we come together to worship, to learn, to serve, and to practice what it means to be this people called by God, through a covenant, to love God fully and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We bear witness to this mysterious God in our presence, and to proclaim that we are called to serve the world in love and grace. As the people of God, we are now a new creation in Christ<sup>22</sup> and are called to be God's ambassadors in the world.<sup>23</sup>

In the United Church of Christ, we understand our relationship to one another as a covenanted relationship of autonomous units of church life. These relationships are

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<sup>21</sup> John Calvin, 844-845.

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel Katongole & Chris Rice, *Journeys of Reconciliation: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 51-53.

<sup>23</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17-21, NRSV

ideally highly interactive, free, open, responsive, and responsible. Hence our polity is centered around the notion of covenant that necessarily includes trust and loyalty — a covenant that fosters mutual dependence. Our churches relate to other churches, associations, and conferences through an established relationship of trust, accountability and loyalty – recognizing that we are deeply interconnected with one another, not only through our mutual identity as God’s beloved, but also because we share in God’s calling and mission to be a witness to the world for love, peace, and justice.

I am seeking ordination in the United Church of Christ because our polity functions as a covenanted autonomy allowing freedom for self-expression as well as freedom to operate how we choose in the local church. Our polity requires and encourages a level of trust and creativity that I find beneficial for ministry in that it is sustainable, effective, and healthy. Also, I relish our stated freedom to believe what we can, without having to necessarily affirm things that we sincerely cannot; we hold creeds as testimonies and not tests. This freedom speaks to a type of belief that is generous, curious, and realistic in relation to the cycles of faith and doubt that is common among believers and ordained ministers alike.

I am also seeking ordination in the United Church of Christ because more often than most, we understand and live out our witness as a gathered community to the world in ways that hit that mark and are deeply in line with God’s desire for the reconciliation of all creation. In other words, our denomination’s historical and enduring commitment to justice (which is often countercultural) is extremely attractive. On a more personal note, I am seeking ordination in the UCC because I have experienced a profound kindness from our ordained leaders and lay folks alike.

Kindness is often overlooked in the Christian tradition, but I believe it to be part of the very character of God. Stanley Hauerwas puts it this way: “To be kind is to learn how to be a creature with other creatures without regret. To be kind is to learn how to receive kindness from others without protection. To be kind is to be drawn into God’s good creation without fear.”<sup>24</sup> Simply put, this kindness has welcomed me in, drawn me deeper into God’s presence, and helped me to discern with clarity the path before me in the United Church of Christ.

### **Ethics and Boundaries**

My sense of pastoral boundaries revolves around my understanding of Sabbath. There was a time in my life, when I believed that Sabbath was a reward for hard work, and therefore something that I had to earn. That Sabbath was merely a nice suggestion to rest, if I had time (which I often did not). Now, I know that it is in fact a reminder of my finiteness, that I am in fact not God. That my work, no matter how hard or long I keep at it, will always remain incomplete. Sabbath, in this way, is a moment of self-realization, an opportunity to delight in who I actually am as a person called by God to witness to the world, but never in isolation or on my own power. It is rest for my body, mind, and soul. It is a special time when my life can become more like the divine.<sup>25</sup> Remembering the Sabbath puts lots of other things in my life in their appropriate order and serves as a reminder that my marriage and my child are and always will be more important than my job as an ordained minister. Also, that I am called to act responsibly with my resources because they are gifts: including my money, my emotional energy,

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<sup>24</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Character of Virtue: Letters to a Godson* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2018), 45.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951) 29.

and my time. Finally, it reminds me that I am still in fact, even now, being created by God into who I will be. Hence, I need to keep learning, growing, asking questions and listening to the advice and council of others.

I believe this self-awareness is crucial for emotionally healthy leadership. It is vital for keeping our relationships with those in our ecclesial communities in their proper place, for maintaining boundaries. As a person charged with keeping intimate matters confidential, managing the church's finances, and giving all people the respect and concern they deserve, nothing could be more important than remembering who I am and my vow to live in true charity with others.<sup>26</sup> Lastly, it is because I understand myself as an ambassador of Christ and a leader in my community, that my personal integrity, candor, and sense of self are fundamental for making healthy followers of Christ.

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<sup>26</sup> *UCC Book of Worship*, 407.

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