

"Passing the Peace: Social Gesture or Sacred Act?"

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Abstract

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Abstract: Interviews were conducted with members from two United Church of Canada churches: one church participated in the liturgical practice of passing the peace regularly every Sunday in their worship while one church did not participate in the liturgical practice of passing the peace at all within their order of worship. The study explores the experience of passing the peace for congregants in both churches: some congregants had been practicing passing the peace for many years while others were experiencing it for the very first time. Comparisons were made and common themes were identified and explored.

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Introduction

The following paper is an assemblage of my research and findings that transpired from my graduate project question "How do individuals experience the liturgical practice of passing the peace in Sunday worship?" In my exploration of this question, I completed research, interviewed participants and analyzed data from my work that I have conducted over the past eight months. Through examining participants' engagement of passing the peace, I gained a greater understanding of how this ancient liturgical practice is understood and experienced by individuals within the United Church of Canada today. In addition, it provided participants with an opportunity to explore passing the peace as a liturgical practice; to gain a greater understanding of what it means to them; and how, and if, it impacted their relationship with God.

As a transformative act, with Christ at the centre as the agent of change, this liturgical practice may impact, not only those who are experiencing it, but also the church as well as the wider community. Hence, demonstrating that passing the peace is much more than a social gesture or greeting but a sacramental act from our primal Christian roots. This paper will impart information, data, analysis and implications that have been instrumental in assisting me to create a valid argument that the Christian liturgical practice of passing the peace is an important topic to research which can benefit leadership with the church, congregations and the wider church community. It will contain five major sections (with an appendix and bibliography) which are as follows: Introduction, Methodology, Data with Themes,

Analysis with Implications; and a Conclusion. Within each major section, there will be related subsections that will enrich and expand the content of this graduate project question. In order to assist in developing my final graduate project final paper's framework and content, this paper will incorporate and employ a variety of resources such as the Review Ethics Board Application (see Appendix I), books, textbooks, journals, articles, magazines, lectures and the internet.

I. Graduate Project Rationale

The rationale for this research is entirely personal. Within my own faith tradition, the liturgical practice of passing the peace "was not a common liturgical practice ...; therefore, I was not accustomed to participating in it ... [and did not] comprehend why the congregation engaged in this [Christian] practice. [I] experienced [it] as a time of social catch-up or as a gesture or greeting rather than a sacramental act."¹ In September 2008, during Orientation Week at the Atlantic School of Theology, I was introduced to Dr. David Deane, professor of Systematic and Historical Theology. In a mini-lecture, Dr. Deane spoke about transformation with a focus on the liturgical practice of passing the peace. He discussed the true meaning or intent of passing the peace and how this was completely the opposite of how this concept was perceived in today's Christian church. He highlighted

¹ Kym Burke-Cole, "Atlantic School of Theology Research Ethics Board GS3000 Graduate Project Research Application 2011-12," (unpublished application, Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2011).

how passing the peace has become more of a gesture rather than a sacramental act. He outlined how the liturgical practice of passing the peace had moved from a sacramental act in which an individual actually passes another individual peace to a time of common greeting and gestures. The theology of reconciliation had become omitted and no longer visible. The liturgical practice of passing the peace embodies the act of reconciliation with one another, and because it does, this means that if you were hungry, I would feed you; if you were thirsty, I would give you something to drink; if you were naked, I would clothe. As in the times of Early Christianity, I would pass you peace.²

This grabbed my attention so profoundly. I was excited and fearful at the same time. Excited because I felt a closer connection to God and God's community and fearful because I wondered ... could I pass the peace authentically knowing its full impact? It was scary what Dr. Deane was saying because they were no longer words, but held much weight to them. After this lecture, a radical change took place within me. I no longer viewed passing the peace as a simple greeting such as "Hey there! Good morning!" but as something that is very profound. As I stated in my Review Ethics Board application, "I no longer looked at passing the peace as a time of greeting but as a time of reconciliation with my brothers and sisters in Christ."³ I was not simply shaking my brother or sister's hand but actually passing them peace. I was now knowledgeable of its true meaning, of its true intent; therefore, my theological perspective was turned completely upside down, inside out. My whole world-view was shaken to its core.

² Kym Burke-Cole, "Atlantic School of Theology Research Ethics Board GS3000 Graduate Project Research Application 2011-12," (unpublished application, Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2011).

³ Ibid.

This knowledge has forever changed who I am as an individual, but more especially as a Christian who practices passing the peace. I became transformed that day and will always remember how much it impacted me. Dr. Deane's lecture was "life-altering for me."⁴

Passing the peace, as transformation, made such an impression on me that I created a major essay entitled "Early Christianity: The Ideology of 'Mode of Being'". This Theological Foundations essay incorporated the concept of transformation as a 'mode of being' from early Christianity and how it could impact today's society if Christians were educated or made aware of the true meaning and intent of "passing the peace" and its transformative impact. Due Dr. Deane's lecture and this essay, my project rationale was to build on what I had learned; to become even more educated about passing the peace; and to incorporate this knowledge through preaching, a bible study or book study which would enable others to gain a greater understanding of this Christian liturgical concept.

Since that Atlantic School of Theology's Orientation Week in 2008, I am reminded daily of how deeply impacted I have been by this liturgical practice. Within worship, I have experienced passing the peace where the intent advocated was this is peace of Christ and not a handshake; however, I have also experienced it more times in which A) it is not even practiced or B) practiced but seen as a time to say "hello" to your neighbour. It is during these latter experiences that I have cringed while participating in this Christian practice. When I

⁴ Kym Burke-Cole, "Atlantic School of Theology Research Ethics Board GS3000 Graduate Project Research Application 2011-12," (unpublished application, Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2011).

experienced this, I felt that I had moved from something sacred and spiritual to something ordinary and commonplace. As I no longer hold the view that passing the peace is a greeting, but understand it as a sacramental in which "I give you peace," it becomes disheartening for me when it becomes a time of social catch-up or greeting. For example, within worship, when the leader states, "The peace of Christ be with you" and the response is "And also with you," I feel so connected to that community and to Christ; however, this feeling becomes short-lived when I go to greet my brother or sister in Christ and they say to me "Weather's been great this week, hasn't it?" or I hear "Did you get up on the greens yesterday?" This drives me absolutely insane and at that moment, I want to stop passing the peace and go into a mini-tutorial as to its true meaning and intent (of course I don't!!!). My reaction is so visceral because I feel that this time of sacredness gets swallowed by a gesture that is seen in the every day. I think it is because its roots are grounded in sacredness and when the intent and meaning of passing the peace gets lost, it feels like Christ gets lost as well.

After some time of experiencing passing the peace in this manner, I began to wonder and reflect on why this was happening. Why was passing the peace being practiced as a greeting or gesture or omitted altogether from liturgy? I began advocating to family and friends on the true meaning of passing the peace. When I did this, a significant revelation was brought to my attention. Many whom I spoke with regarding passing the peace did not know about the intention behind this liturgical practice. One person said "How come I was never

taught this? I have been going to church for 25 years.” This created a curiosity within me to know why it had not been taught, but more importantly, how were individuals experiencing passing the peace? In my passion for passing the peace, a burning desire to delve deeper with this concept emerged; hence, the genesis of my graduate project question was born four years ago.

Historical Information

I. Passing the Peace Within History

Passing the Peace began as the kiss of peace which is one of the “oldest practices of the Christian tradition.”⁵ Its origins began in “early Christian communion liturgy”⁶ where it indicated that “this is a sign of peace ... let peace be made in your conscience.”⁷ By the High Middle Ages, it was still a time of reconciliation and Christian unity during communion and in other Christian rituals such as baptism, ordination, and consecration of bishops to name a few. In addition, it was not only exchanged during religious ceremonies and rites but also within the legal realm as well. The kiss of peace “could be given or exchanged in rituals of contract-making or dispute settlement, and in the act of homage.”⁸ During this time, in particular, within medieval law, the kiss or *firmare* “supplanted older customary forms [such as a handshake, insertion of hands, transfer of a rod, charter, money or the touching of relics or the Gospels]⁹

⁵ Karen Harvey, *The Kiss In History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 19.

⁶ Ibid, 19.

⁷ Ibid, 19.

⁸ Ibid, 20.

⁹ Ibid, 40.

especially the different kinds of hand gesture."¹⁰ It was a legal gesture in order for the contact to be binding. What eventually began to emerge was the kiss of peace was the legal gesture that had sealed contracted as other gestures, such as the ones indicated above, had "to be supplemented with the kiss"¹¹ in order for the contact to be binding.

In 15th and 16th centuries, the peace was understood as "fundamental connection between inside and outside, soul and body."¹² In Thomas Aquinas' book, *Summa contra gentiles*, he wrote that

Man performs certain sensible actions, not to arouse God, but to arouse himself to things divine: such as prostrations, genuflexions, raising the voice and singing. Such things are not done as though God needed them, for ... he looks at the affection of the heart, and not the mere movements of the body: but we do them for our own sake, that by them our intention may be fixed on God, and our hearts inflamed.¹³

According to Aquinas, "experience shows ... that acts of the body [and] the soul [are] aroused to a certain knowledge or affection. Wherefore it is evidently reasonable that we should employ bodies in order to raise our minds to God."¹⁴ The kiss of peace "could express the movements of the soul and spirit; the performance of specific gestures could move the soul 'to certain knowledge or affection'.

¹⁰ Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace: Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 41.

¹¹ Ibid, 44.

¹² Karen Harvey, *The Kiss In History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 20.

¹³ Ibid,20.

¹⁴ Ibid,20.

Across the history of medieval gesture, this sense of exchange and mutual influence is never absent."¹⁵ Therefore, the kiss of peace was not considered an ordinary or everyday gesture, but "something special and could reflect or effect more profound and abstract values."¹⁶ According to Bernhard of Clairvaux, the kiss of peace "could express the abstract and ineffable, connecting mystical experience, theological understanding and liturgical symbolism."¹⁷ In the religious realm, the kiss united "the mutual love of Christ and the faithful soul."¹⁸ In this marriage, the "Christian soul and Saviour encounter one another 'with kissing, embracing, drawing together, naked to naked'."¹⁹

It was during this time, within Christian liturgy, that the pax-board was introduced. The priest would kiss the pax-board, then the deacon or the subdeacon [carried it] to the other priests in the choir that pax that he himself [had] kissed, and they kiss it one after another with devotion."²⁰ The pax-board was hierarchal in nature as it transmitted "the love of Christ as the Lord [gives] love to the Church, the Church to the priests and the priest to those standing by."²¹ In addition to the introduction of the pax-board, the kiss of peace was beginning to become a substitute for the Eucharist rather than "as preparation for receiving communion."²² This evolution demonstrated the level of importance the kiss of peace was having

¹⁵ Karen Harvey, *The Kiss In History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005, 20.

¹⁶ Ibid, 20.

¹⁷ Ibid, 20.

¹⁸ Ibid, 21.

¹⁹ Ibid, 21.

²⁰ Ibid, 22.

²¹ Ibid, 22.

²² Ibid, 22.

within the Church as it seen as having "the power to link the visible (what is 'shown') with the spiritual. This power to connect inside and outside could also make a gesture as versatile as the kiss deeply ambiguous."²³

With the popularity of the pax-board, there was a "decline of the face-to-face kiss."²⁴ During the Middle Ages, the kiss of peace was significantly importance; however, it "was coming undone. How could one act be both spontaneous and ritualised, public and private, sacred and profane, spiritual and erotic, a sign of peace and a source of discord?"²⁵ Hence, the kiss of peace became revolutionized. During the Reformation, there "was little interest in restoring or reforming the kiss of peace."²⁶ Martin Luther described the kiss of peace as "historical and contingent rather than a transcendent sign of peace."²⁷ Within Luther's *Formula missae* of 1523, he

left no place for the physical kiss of peace exchanged among congregants. He described the prayer of peace as 'a public absolution of the sins of the communicants'. Any sense of 'horizontal' peace-making among Christians was eliminated, being replaced by a vertical relationship between God and person that was not created through any gesture but only through 'the Gospel voice announcing remission of sins'.²⁸

Within various German Protestant liturgies from the 1520s, there is only one incident of "a liturgical kiss [that] is described."²⁹ This is found in Ulrich Zwingli's *Aktion oder Bruch* (1525), which

²³ Karen Harvey, *The Kiss In History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 22.

²⁴ Ibid, 24.

²⁵ Ibid, 25.

²⁶ Ibid, 25.

²⁷ Ibid, 26.

²⁸ Ibid, 26.

²⁹ Ibid, 26.

states "the pastor kisses the Gospel book just before communion is distributed. Any sort of physical kiss of peace was eliminated: neither the medieval pax-board nor the ancient face-to-face kiss was mentioned."³⁰ In most Protestant worship services, there was an inclusion of a "prayer of peace and response from the congregation - but the body and the kiss could no longer symbolise or evoke this peace."³¹ Thus, the kiss of peace was no longer "a kiss" but now a prayer. It was also no longer something that was intimate and shared amongst Christians, but was now brought forth by one individual verbally. For this Christian practice, the intimate connection to community and its role in reconciliation and unity was being lost.

The eradication of the kiss of peace via worship services was inevitable. The pax-board and prayer of peace were deemed much more suitable as "clergy and laypeople found the public face-to-face kiss ... increasingly troubling. The kiss disappeared from the theory and practice of the related secular ritual of homage in this period as well."³² The fundamentals of kiss of peace from early Christianity and medieval times, which held the "belief that public gesture could and should connect body and spirit in mutual influence,"³³ no longer existed. German Protestants were more inclined to believe that "the power of a public gesture to affect the inner person as transgressive, to be either denied, concealed or forbidden."³⁴ In this context, the

³⁰ Karen Harvey, *The Kiss In History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 26.

³¹ *Ibid*, 26.

³² *Ibid*, 29.

³³ *Ibid*, 29.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

kiss of peace was now seen "as a meaningless gesture"³⁵ and due to the "separation of inside and outside it [made it] much more difficult for the kiss to connect social values like peace, Christian unity or political order with the individual: its versatile range of meanings was lost."³⁶ Thus, the liturgical kiss began its evolution to our modern-day understanding. Opportunities for the kiss of peace "to aid [in] the reconciliation of parishioners" were no longer available. The kiss of peace within "Roman and non-Roman Churches alike ... was missing from worship for hundreds of years, and was apparently never greatly missed."³⁷

In South India, in the year 1950, the kiss of peace made its return as a liturgical rite with assistance from the United Church of South India. In 'Dix' *The Shape of Liturgy*, which was "compiled by Protestant rather than Catholic Christians,"³⁸ the peace had re-emerged. In the first edition, the peace was positioned just before communion but it was no longer a kiss. Instructions for the peace within the second and third editions of this text were as follows:

When the Peace is given, the giver places his right palm against the right palm of the receiver, and each closes his left hand over the other's right hand. The Peace is given before the offertory ... as a sign of fellowship, and the offertory sentences recall St. Augustine's teaching that the sacrifice we offer is our unity to Christ. The presbyter gives the Peace to those ministering with him, and these in turn give it to the congregation. It may be passed through the congregation either along the

³⁵ Karen Harvey, *The Kiss In History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 29.

³⁶ Ibid, 29.

³⁷ Colin Buchanan, *The Kiss of Peace* (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 14.

³⁸ Ibid, 15.

rows, of from those in front to those behind.³⁹

The evolution of the kiss of peace into our modern understanding of passing the peace was now evident; however, the re-emergence of liturgical practice of passing the peace was not fast and furious within the various denominations. The progress of this liturgical concept being included in worship was very slow. Passing the Peace was not evident in the faith denomination of "Anglicans in England and America in the 1950s ... [nor] in the Anglican rites in Hong Kong (1957), Canada, Japan, [and] West Indies (1959) [as well as] India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon (1960)."⁴⁰ Within the Roman Catholic Tradition, passing the peace "is not actually mentioned in Vatican II *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* (1963);"⁴¹ however, by 1970, the Peace referenced within "the 'General Instruction' [that] accompanied the new order of the mass (*Missa Normativa*)."⁴² The liturgical practice of passing the peace was renewed within liturgy as it went from "an unknown action in the early sixties to that which [was] confidently assumed to be happening everywhere in the seventies."⁴³ The recovery of the Christian practice was partly due to "the growing emphasis upon the church as the body of Christ, and the corresponding importance of the horizontal relationships involved, [having] spilled into virtually all the areas of liturgy, and the kiss of peace is only one expression, albeit a key one."⁴⁴ Even though, its return may seem well-received; unfortunately, "it is unlikely that congregations which

³⁹ Colin Buchanan, *The Kiss of Peace* (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 15.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 16.

⁴¹ Ibid, 18.

⁴² Ibid, 18.

⁴³ Ibid, 18.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 18.

practice the Peace will know why they do so - and even more unlikely that those who refrain from any action understand any positive rationale. The restoration of the practice has ... outmarched any teaching or instruction about it."⁴⁵ Therefore, it would seem that the Peace's re-emergence was more centered on practicum with very little theological understanding being transmitted to congregants.

Methodology

The qualitative methodologies that I employed in order to obtain research and gather input from participants were *Grounded Theory* and *Phenomenology*.

I. Graduate Project Field Sites and Participants

The project research field sites were two United Church of Canada congregations with one congregation regularly practicing the liturgical practice of passing the peace while the other did not. I recruited three participants from each congregation and conducted one-on-one interviews with them. Three participants had limited or no experience in passing the peace while the rest of the participants had vast experience (via weekly worship services over a long duration) in this area. All participants were over the age of 18; signed their consent forms and possessed a willingness to share their experience of the liturgical practice of passing the peace. For purposes of this graduate project, all participants have been given aliases.

⁴⁵ Colin Buchanan, *The Kiss of Peace* (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 21.

II. Grounded Theory

The first qualitative methodology is *Grounded Theory* which was first developed in 1967 by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. They "held that theories should be grounded in data from the field, especially in actions interactions, and social process of people."⁴⁶ The core essence of the *Grounded Theory* method is that "the development or generation of a theory [is] closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied."⁴⁷ In my case, that phenomenon would be passing the peace. The proposed purpose for *Grounded Theory* is that it enables the researcher to become entrenched with the research and allows them to get "into and [as] close to the real world so that the results and findings are grounded in the empirical world."⁴⁸ With this methodology, the researcher is not disconnected from the research setting, but "enters the environment of the people with whom the research is being conducted."⁴⁹ In the field, the researcher, through a series of interviews, is able to observe and record information which will, in turn, become the basis for their data analysis. For *Grounded Theory* methodology, analysis of data is a process that is "systematic and follows a standard format."⁵⁰ The framework of *Grounded Theory* has three steps which are categorized as "codings" - open, axial and selective. In open coding, "the

⁴⁶ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Traditions*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc, 1998), 56.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 56.

⁴⁸ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2002) 125.

⁴⁹ Jody Clarke, "The Research Guidelines Qualitative Research Theory and Methodology," (GS 3000 course handout given at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 23, 2011).

⁵⁰ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Traditions*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc, 1998), 57.

researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information;"⁵¹ in axial coding, "the investigator assembles the data in new ways after opening coding;"⁵² and lastly, in selective coding, the researcher identifies a "story line" and writes a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model."⁵³ These three codings associated with *Grounded Theory* are "to help provide some "standardization and rigor" to the analytical process. Grounded theory is meant to "build theory rather than test theory." It strives to provide researchers with analytical tools for handling masses of raw data"⁵⁴ Some strengths of this particular methodology are its "systematic procedure of data analysis; data analysis is not a routine-like process (it is a creative and iterative process); methodology gives good support for discovering new ideas and relations; and it has the ability to incorporate unique insights during the course of study (Orlikowsky 1993)."⁵⁵ Some limitations are that the "results are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies; data analysis can be time consuming;"⁵⁶ and lastly, there can be a large volume of data

⁵¹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Traditions*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc, 1998), 57.

⁵² Ibid, 57.

⁵³ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2002), 127.

⁵⁵ Goran Goldkuhl and Stefan Cronholm. "Adding Theoretical Grounding to Grounded Theory - Toward Multi-Grounded Theory." <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/viewFile/6784/7027>

(accessed March 23rd, 2012), 190.

⁵⁶ Johnson, R. Burke. "Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research."

http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/oh_master/Ch14/Tab14-02.pdf (accessed March 23rd, 2012), Table 14-02).

which can result in frustration as there are no clues as to where to start categorization (which is especially valid for novice users)."⁵⁷

III. Phenomenology

The second qualitative methodology is *Phenomenology* which is "a philosophical tradition [that] was first used in the development of a rigorous science by German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl."⁵⁸ For Husserl, phenomenology's main thrust was to investigate "how people describe things and experience them through their senses."⁵⁹ As a philosopher, Husserl assumed that "we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness."⁶⁰ As *Phenomenology* involves the senses, the process of extrapolating data relies heavily on the participants' description of their lived experience. Their specific encounter with the phenomena "must be described, explicated, and interpreted ... Interpretation is essential to an understanding of the experience and the experience includes the interpretation."⁶¹ For the participants, "there is no separate (or objective) reality for [them]. There is only what they know their experience is and means."⁶² *Phenomenology* essentially asks the question, "What is the structure and essence of experience of this

⁵⁷ Goran Goldkuhl and Stefan Cronholm. "Adding Theoretical Grounding to Grounded Theory - Toward Multi-Grounded Theory." <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/viewFile/6784/7027> (accessed October 7th, 2011), 190.

⁵⁸ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2002), 105.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 105.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 105.

⁶¹ Ibid, 106.

⁶² Ibid, 106.

phenomenon for these people?"⁶³ For phenomenological researchers, it is imperative that there is recognition for the importance of knowing "what people experience and how they interpret the world ... [and] ... the only way for [them] to really know what another person experiences is to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for [themselves]."⁶⁴ *Phenomenology* is unique in its approach as "there is an assumption that *there is an essence or essences to shared experience*. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced."⁶⁵ The framework for the *Phenomenology* methodology is outlined in the following three steps

According to von Echartsbert (1986), the three steps are Step 1 - The Problem and Question Formulation - The Phenomenon. The researcher delineates a focus of investigation ... formulates a question in such a way that it is understandable to others; Step 2 - The Data Generating Situation - The Protocol Life Text ... researchers start with descriptive narrative provided by subjects who are viewed as co-researchers ... we query the person and engage in dialogue, or we combine the two; [and] Step 3 - The Data Analysis - Explication and Interpretation. Once collected the data are read and scrutinized so as to reveal their structure, meaning configuration, coherence, and the circumstances of their occurrence and clustering ... emphasis is on the study of configuration and meaning ... involving both the structure of meaning and how it is created.⁶⁶

⁶³ Jody Clarke, "The Research Guidelines Qualitative Research Theory and Methodology," (GS 3000 course handout given at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 23, 2011).

⁶⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2002), 106.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 106.

⁶⁶ Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 1994), 15.

Some strengths of this particular methodology are there is "direct interaction with the participants; the researcher is able to ask for clarification and to ask immediate follow-up/probing questions [supplemental questions]; the researcher is able to observe nonverbal responses which can be supportive or contradictory to the verbal responses; and the data is in the participants' own words."⁶⁷ Some limitations of this method are the "findings are difficult to generalize to a larger population; data is often difficult to analyze and summarize; and some critics of phenomenology think you cannot describe the unique experiences AND make generalizations about the experiences at the same time (Marvin Farber 1966)."⁶⁸

IV. Graduate Project Core Research Questions

Within both *Grounded Theory* and *Phenomenology* qualitative research methods, I utilized a list of core research questions (see Appendix I) that were specifically designed to gather data which could be beneficial for this graduate project.

Thematic Data

With the utilization and implementation of both qualitative research methods (*Grounded Theory* and *Phenomenology*), I was able to delve deeper into the immense, and at times overwhelming, amount of data. After many grueling hours of transcription, I began my

⁶⁷ The University of Idaho. "Phenomenology - The "Lived" Experience." <http://www.cnr.uidaho.edu/css506/Powerpoints/final%20Phenomenology%20edited.ppt> (accessed March 23rd, 2012).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

analysis of my participants' experiences and discovered three core meanings or themes that emerged from their voices. The first theme was connection which manifested itself in two ways: physical and spiritual; the second theme was transformation; and the third theme was sacredness. The following section will present the thematic data that was revealed during participants' interviews.

I. Connection

In today's society, being connected has links to technology more so than relationships. However, in early Christianity, the kiss of peace was a way of connecting because it was "a bond which [was] suppose to be unbreakable."⁶⁹ This covenant of unity was not only "communication of the peace of God"⁷⁰ but was also "an intricate factor for early Christians and the doctrine of the Trinity because it signified the unification of the Christian community."⁷¹ Those I interviewed experienced passing the peace as a connector or a time of binding. Psychiatrist Ernest Wolf wrote in his book "Treating the Self" about the "merger" need as one of the primary needs, essential to human existence.⁷² The ability to connect, for my participants, gave them an opportunity to relate with other people, the worship service, the community and God. This theme of connection became exhibited in two ways: physically and spiritually.

⁶⁹ Colin Buchanan, *The Kiss of Peace*, (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 3.

⁷⁰ L. Edward Phillips, *The Ritual Kiss In Early Christian Worship*, (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 1996), 21.

⁷¹ Kym Burke-Cole, "Early Christianity: Ideology of Mode of Being," Unpublished Essay (Halifax, NS, 2008), 7.

⁷² Ernest Wolf, *Treating the Self: Elements of Clinical Self Psychology*, (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1988).

(a) **Physical Connection**

The first component of connection is physical. This is an important factor in human development. According to Ernest Wolf, "human beings are *pre-adapted* to actively participate in both physical and psychological interactions with the environment, which provided, respectively, for the individuals physical and psychological needs. Both are necessary for survival."⁷³ The importance of physical connection is not only limited to humans, but also includes animals. In a study with rhesus monkeys, "the stimulation provided through tactile contact with conspecifics seems crucial for such normal development to take place."⁷⁴ The tactile contact that the rhesus monkeys experienced was "obviously a very basic and necessary component of ... [their] social life." Touch is significant. Within my own research, it was indicated by my participants that physical connection during the liturgical practice of passing the peace was an essential part of their experience in passing the peace. They concretely identified three physical connection components necessary when engaging in this practice which were touch, eye contact and spoken words.

(i) **Touch**

The first component for physical connection was touch which is "first sense to develop, and it functions even after seeing and

⁷³ Ernest Wolf, *Treating the Self: Elements of Clinical Self Psychology*, (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1988), 10.

⁷⁴ Barnard Brazelton, *Touch: The Foundation of Experience*, (Madison, Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1990), 156.

hearing begin to fade."⁷⁵ Touch, "more than any other sense, is universal across cultures and species."⁷⁶ It is "our most social sense. Unlike seeing, hearing and smelling and tasting, which can generally be done alone, touching typically implies an interaction with another person."⁷⁷ To touch another human is an "intimate act"⁷⁸ which is also "extremely important for social interactions."⁷⁹

As indicated, touch plays a significant role in our human development and our social interactions. During biblical times, its importance is highlighted in many narratives. For example, the woman at the well who reaches out and touches the hem of Jesus' cloak as well as Jesus' healing touch affecting many such as the blind, the lame and the diseased. Touch was an intricate piece of Jesus' ministry. However, in today's society, we live in a time where touch is seen in a negative light. Touch can be seen as intrusive, abrasive and even invasive. Unlike early Christian times where touch amongst people was accepted, within our culture "people rarely touch one another [and] any form of intimacy in worship is difficult. Some may feel uncomfortable with the invitation to exchange peace."⁸⁰ There are many individuals today who live with a fear of being touched and suffer from this social phobia which is known as aphephobia⁸¹ or aphephobia.⁸² While there are those who are in constant fear of

⁷⁵ Tiffany Field, *Touch*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2001), Ibid, 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 19.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 19.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁸⁰ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 74.

⁸¹ Aphephobia website, "Aphephobia," <http://common-phobias.com/aphe/index.htm> (accessed March 30th, 2012).

⁸² Ibid.

another person's touch, there are those who embrace touch in their daily lives. Within the church setting, ecumenically, there has been the recognition that "worship needs to engage all the senses including touch."⁸³ Touch, which became evident in my research, was identified by my participants as one of three main elements necessary for passing the peace. This sentiment was articulated very clearly in the following comments.

Harold:

"It's very important. And if I did [passing the peace], without shaking your hand and saying "the peace of Christ," it doesn't do it for me the way physical connection will do it."

Mary-Ann:

"I feel really good about the fact that I can share with someone, just a little touch, a little feeling and I feel that that person knows that I am thinking of them. So when I pass the peace to you, I am thinking of you."

Most participants shared their experiences during flu season and the H1N1 health scare and its influence on the liturgical practice of passing the peace. When questioned "How did it feel to pass the peace without physically touching?" participants shared their experience of no touching and its personal impact.

Felix:

"It didn't feel as significant somehow. Even though I was convinced that, in my mind, I am saying that little prayer, the fact that you couldn't touch the person (demonstrates touching hands) made a difference. The touch is part of it for sure. It is for me ... the touch is important."

⁸³ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 74.

Beverly:

"That's different. That's different. It's not the same as touching another person and passing the peace with touch. "

While these participants noted that passing the peace lacked significance and felt different, one participant was adamant that you could not pass the peace without touching another or having some form of interaction.

Mary-Ann:

"They tried passing the peace without touching, you can't do it. I can't. This is what you do (put hands together like a prayer and nodded to interviewer) ... "Peace of Christ." But you can do that very quickly. But in order to touch someone and to take their hand, it takes more effort and you have to have that connection. I find that it's quite different then when you do the nod."

For these participants, touch was one of the main elements that was necessary in order for them to experience passing the peace fully and completely. Their experience highlights how touch is indeed an intimate act and an integral part of their social interaction during this liturgical practice.

(ii) Eye Contact

The second main physical element was eye contact. When we engage in the world, our experience emerges "predominantly through our eyes."⁸⁴ Eye contact is "one of the most powerful body language tools that a human being has [and] is one of the *subtlest* movements we can

⁸⁴ Perceptual Edge website, "Visual Communication," http://www.perceptualedge.com/articles/Whitepapers/Visual_Communication.pdf (accessed March 30th, 2012)

make."⁸⁵ To engage in eye contact is almost effortless as the amount of "energy it takes to shift your eyes from one place to another or lock your eyes in place with another person's eye is little to none." Even though making eye contact with another may seem "effortless or can be as fast as a blink of an eye,"⁸⁶ it can be very revealing as it can show "a lot about one's character."⁸⁷

Within our culture,

Traditionally speaking, eye contact is more prevalent in western cultures. For example, in America, it is a sign of respect when one makes direct eye contact when talking to an superior person such a boss or the president, while in Japan or China, it would be a sign of disrespect if one were to look directly at a superior in the eye such as the emperor or even, in some common cases, an elderly person.⁸⁸

Even with these noted "cultural differences in eye contact, eye contact *is* one the most basic, fundamental traits of human beings."⁸⁹ For those participating in my research, eye contact such as a lingering look, a glance held for moments rather than seconds or an intentional gaze between friends or strangers was a significant part of their experience in passing the peace which is reiterated in their comments.

⁸⁵ Article Base website, "The Meaning of Eye Contact," <http://www.articlesbase.com/self-improvement-articles/the-meaning-of-eye-contact-1111664.html> (accessed March 30th, 2012).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Felix:

"I make a conscious effort to have it mean a little bit more to me. So I try to look the person in the eye, I try to make a little bit more of a contact than simply "hello, how are you?"

Dennis:

"[to] genuinely look [into] someone else's face and their eyes and, perhaps, acknowledge that individual so it may be a more sincere greeting."

Mary-Ann:

"So if I were to pass the peace to you and you were sitting there, I would think "Kym, peace of Christ" (*in her demonstration she stares intently, shakes hand firmly, looking intently into my eyes and is very deliberate in her hand shake*). Right, I would think of your for a minute and I would turn to the next person."

Felix:

"I try to make a conscious effort, like you say, to make eye contact or hold eye contact for a little bit more than you would normally would just saying "hello" to people."

Harold:

"... in the passing of the peace when you physically connect, you know, and the eye contact as well, you know, very important."

However, not all felt that way. When discussion was held on flu season and the H1N1 health scare with regards to no touching, one participant felt that eye contact was better than the alternative - no physical connection at all. For her, touch was the most important aspect in her experience during passing the peace.

Beverly:

"Eye contact is better but it doesn't matter. To look at someone is almost a touch but not quite a touch."

(iii) Spoken Words

The last main physical element, which aided in participants feeling connected during passing the peace, was spoken words. Before we are born, we are exposed to words. They "have great meaning in our lives."⁹⁰ Words relay our "thoughts about different things [and] ... shows what we think about the world. They show our perception. What we speak is about what we feel."⁹¹ Words have great significance and can impact our lives.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked ... Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Just as these words carried much weight and meaning during the time of Jesus and his disciples, my research participants 2000 years later recognized their magnitude when they shared in the liturgical practice of passing the peace.

Harold:

"Saying to someone "peace be with you," that's a hugely powerful statement."

"... you know we say the Lord's prayer, but do we really, do we really, do we really listen to what it is or do we really think about what it is? And to say for me to say to you, 'peace be with you' ummm, it's peace in every sense of the word, you know."

"to be able to say to them, you know, 'and peace be with you' ... and mean it and really mean it."

⁹⁰ Experts Column website, "Importance of Spoken Words," <http://expertscolumn.com/content/importance-spoken-word> (accessed March 30th, 2012).

⁹¹ Ibid.

Weldon:

"I couldn't have said those words without meaning it. [If] you just said them in another way where you didn't mean it, it just would be bad."

Not only was giving the words to another person important, but receiving the response of "And also with you" was seen as just as significant by one participant.

Beverly:

"The Christ within you is talking to the Christ in the person. I feel it is important and I like to have the response said."

Even though, one participant felt that the words were important, she indicated that they sometimes get "lost on other things" when she is trying to pass the peace of Christ. She explains her experience of this in the following interview conversation:

Beverly:

"...right now once we say 'the peace of Christ be with you' 'and also with you' the next person you come to may just be the person who wants to talk socially. You get stuck there and if you don't move on and pass the peace of Christ from within you again, that's where you're stuck. So, it doesn't spread. It gets lost in the other things."

Researcher:

"How does that make you feel when you're going forward with the full intent with Christ dwelling with you to pass on this greeting and it gets kind of stopped ... it comes up against, I guess I don't want to say a wall, but there's a barrier there, an obstacle, how does that impact your passing of the peace?"

Beverly:

"I try not to go back to the 'good morning' stuff. I continue to pass the peace because I want to. It's important to me, yes."

Researcher:

"Even when you receive a greeting that's not?"

Beverly:

"That's not the passing of the peace. I still feel that that was an important greeting and I will go on and pass the peace."

Researcher:

"But you recognize, from what I can understand from our conversations, you recognize that that is an everyday greeting, more so than something more intentional."

Beverly:

"Oh yeah, yeah."

(b) **Spiritual Connection**

The second component of connection was spiritual. Many participants expressed their experience of passing the peace as a time of bonding with the other and as a way of drawing closer to their church, community and God. For some, they felt that created an element of being one with Christ. According to Stanley Hauerwas, Christian Theologian, Church, as God's creation, "is a community whose memory of its savior creates the miracle of being a people whose very differences contribute to their unity."⁹²

Bound in their unity, when early Christians participated in the "Kiss of Peace, this indicated that collectively as a community "we will treat you like Christ would treat you."⁹³ In order to do so, we have to be Christ-like ourselves. Within the Roman Catholic

⁹² Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 149.

⁹³ Kym Burke-Cole, "Early Christianity: Ideology of Mode of Being," Unpublished Essay (Halifax, NS, 2008), 17.

tradition, there is a mantra which states that the "Church is Marian before it she is Petrine." What this essentially means, according to Von Balthasar, is

Before men were placed into office, the whole Church was present in Mary." Just as Mary lived intimately united to the Trinity, we too are called to respond to the action of the Holy Spirit so that Christ reigns in us and directs us to live in faithful love and obedience to the Father.⁹⁴

Therefore, before we are called to be the 'church' or proclaim to be the 'body of Christ', we have to be pregnant with the Holy Spirit; thus, Christ has to be present within us. Once we have Christ dwelling within us, we then and only then are we able to become 'church.'

As a church, a covenant of unity exists which is the "communication of the peace of God among those who have a common Father using the very lips which have 'drunk in one Spirit of holiness'."⁹⁵ For early Christians, "Unity and love were not mere extras to church life - they were integral to being the church at all. The kiss expressed and conserved this dimension."⁹⁶

When the church (body of Christ) participates in passing the peace, with Christ dwelling in us, we are saying "I pass you peace." Peace meaning if you are hungry, I will feed you, if you strike me, I will not strike you back and so on, which is evident within scripture,

⁹⁴ Love Crucified website, "The Marian dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine," http://lovecrucified.com/fr_jordi_rivero/marian_principle.html (accessed November 21st, 2011).

⁹⁵ L. Edward Phillips, *The Ritual Kiss In Early Christian Worship*, (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 1996), 21.

⁹⁶ Colin Buchanan, *The Kiss of Peace*, (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 5.

in particular Matthew 25.35-36. This reading states "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me"⁹⁷ When this happens, the church becomes transformed because "Christians [become] a new kind of body. They [are] no longer individual or separate but [are] united as they were establishing themselves as one body - the body of Christ."⁹⁸

Spiritually, when participants passed the peace with each other during Sunday worship, some felt they were "building and extending [their] community," "improving their relationship with the community," and it acted as "a nice little connector with the other person." The vernacular to describe passing the peace and their experience were expressed in words such as "binding," "connection," "acknowledgement," and "a bond." One felt that it "strengthen[ed] the bond to do the mission of the church" while another stated that one could "meet the divine in community." Their voices echo their spiritual connectedness which they experience during passing the peace in the following statements:

Mary-Ann:

"It extends your bond in the church family ... the best thing is that bond that you feel with the other person ... You already have a connection with the spiritual, you have a special feeling ... you're thinking about your relationship with God. The passing the peace is when you share that you have this common bond with the other person."

⁹⁷ BibleGateway website, "Matthew 25.35-40," <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025:35-40&version=NIV> (accessed November 24th, 2011).

⁹⁸ Kym Burke-Cole, "Early Christianity - Ideology of Mode of Being," Unpublished Essay, (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2008), 17.

Harold:

"We're involving not only you and I, but we're involving a spiritual connection ... We are saying to each other, on a spiritual level, we want to engage Christ ... And I think that's a profound statement, you know. It's a statement of peace of Christ, of spirituality and the Godliness."

Weldon:

"You make the connection with person, you look them in the eyes, and you say those words yeah, that's getting closer to God."

Even though one participant had difficulty identifying the experience in a spiritual manner, she still recognized that something distinctive was occurring when she passed the peace with another.

Beverly:

"You have the opportunity, like intentionally putting out your hand ... you feel this thing that's there, but you may have forgotten to feel it all week."

For most participants, they felt that part of their experience was the spiritual connection that was created from passing the peace. This spiritual connection was not only confined to that moment within worship, but was seen as an extension that would seep into their already existing relationships within their church communities.

II. Transformation

The second theme that emerged from my participants' data was Transformation. This term is defined as a "marked change, as in

appearance or character.”⁹⁹ Within the business model, transformation is understood as “a profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness... transformation implies a basic change of character and little or no resemblance with the past configuration or structure.”¹⁰⁰ As indicated, both definitions explain transformation as a process of change that occurs; thus, rendering the individual or organization modified. However, even though participants indicated that a change occurred within them when they engaged in passing the peace, their transformation was centred in the context of a spiritual transformation which was relational with Christ.

According to David Deane’s essay, *On Passing the Peace*, he states “As being Christlike is what we are intended to be the self must be transformed in order to be conformed to Christ. This transformation, from being things like me to being things like Jesus is the basic form of salvation as understood in the early Church.”¹⁰¹ According to Stanley Hauerwas,

the proclamation of the coming kingdom of God, its presence and its future coming is a claim about how God and the establishment of that rule through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus the Gospels portray Jesus not only offering the possibility of achieving what were heretofore thought to be impossible ethical ideals. He actually proclaims and embodies a way of life

⁹⁹ The Free Dictionary website, “Transformation,” <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/transformation> (accessed April 1st, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Business Dictionary website, “Transformation,” <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/transformation.html#ixzz1qoaPCib5> (accessed April 1st, 2012).

¹⁰¹ David Deane, “On Passing The Peace,” Unpublished Essay, (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2011), 6.

that God has made possible in the here and now.¹⁰²

Therefore, salvation is not only eternal in the here-after, but also in the here and now through our embodiment of Christ in the world.

With this early understanding of salvation, we, in our relationship with God, as a believer in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross, through the power of the Holy Spirit, am able to have Christ dwell within in us. This is further collaborated within Romans 8.11 which states "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."¹⁰³ This scripture reference demonstrates how, when we believe in Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected, Christ's spirit is able to dwell within us. And because Christ's spirit is made visible within us, we are then able to be Christ-like and participate in Christ-like acts; hence, salvation is no longer a gift we receive in the eternal hereafter, but is present within our lives today.

Naturally, as humans, we are not peaceable. We are only able to engage in peaceable acts such as turning the other cheek because Christ was able to do so and Christ lives within us. Therefore, when we participate in the liturgical practice of passing the peace, not only is this a symbolic action, but a transformational one within ourselves as well. By reaching out our hand to another during passing the peace, it is not our hand that is extended but Christ's. It is

¹⁰² Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 129.

¹⁰³ BibleGateway website, "Romans 8.11,"

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A11&version=NIV> (accessed November 24th, 2011).

not our peace that "we are passing, [but] the peace of Christ."¹⁰⁴ It is through this transformation of being Christ-like that participants receive the gift of salvation from the Holy Spirit.

For most participants, transformation was relational to Christ and in turn, was relational to their understanding of passing the peace. Initially for some participants, they experienced passing the peace as "uncomfortable," "something of a novelty," and unfamiliar, however, their experience changed which is disclosed during their sharing.

Felix: *(eager to share his transformation)*

"I'll say that my understanding of passing the peace has changed since I first started doing it. At first it was simply a greeting. You know, turn around say hello, shake your hand or whatever but ... it's begun to mean more to me ... it's gone beyond simply a "good morning" or "how are you?" ... it's taken on more of a spiritual meaning as opposed to simply greeting someone as you greet anybody."

Weldon:

"this is a more meaningful thing than having the greeter shake your hand when you come through the door to get your bulletin. This is heavier than that, it is meant to be."

Harold: *(speaking on his inner transformation)*

"It helps me become more reflective on what it really means to say those words ... for me to say to you, 'peace be with you,' it's peace in every sense of the word ... what it does is it has a calming effect, it just helps me to be just more in tuned."

Beverly: *(acts as a reminder for her)*

"I'm aware that Christ is within me, has been, and you're passing it, you're giving peace to someone else."

¹⁰⁴ David Deane, "On Passing The Peace," Unpublished Essay, (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2011), 9.

Dennis:

"it's an opportunity to recognize the Christ in each one of us."

However, he also indicated that he has never saw Christ in the other when he passed the peace. He felt that passing the peace was

"An opportunity for the congregation to meet and greet ... and to reaffirm friendship in the community with other people. But our church regularly has ... a coffee time where I see that being an opportunity to do that... I don't see it [passing the peace] as being as critical."

Even though both congregations participated in a time of fellowship after Sunday worship, all other participants (other than Dennis), experienced passing the peace with Christ at the centre. Not only did they experience Christ dwelling within them, two participants brought their experience of passing the peace with them in their everyday lives. For one participant, she said "It affects me every day. Sometimes in a small way, sometimes in a big way." Through their transformation, they saw this liturgical practice as an act that was no longer confined to the four walls of a church building, but something that could ripple out into the wider community. For those who participated in passing the peace, through their transformation and embodiment of Christ, were able then to bring forth Christ-likeness to the wider world. Passing the peace was not only confined to a moment in time during worship, but extended beyond walls, buildings or congregations. Passing the peace has become a 'mode of being' which began with Christ dwelling within their hearts and then overflowed into their everyday lives, which leads them to be able to

be Christ-like. The "change of [their] mindset" can have the potential to make a radical impact in the wider context.

III. Sacredness

The last theme that emerged was Sacredness. In early Christianity, the 'kiss of peace' was intricate element of baptism and Holy Communion. Within the sacrament of Baptism, it was a rigorous process of rite which "sometimes lasted up to three years, this period of training was called the "catechumenate"."¹⁰⁵ Candidates for baptism were only allowed to engage in the kiss of peace once they had been deemed 'holy'. Within the sacrament of Holy Communion, passing the peace was included within the Eucharist as a sign of reconciliation with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Before one could enter into the sacrament of Communion, Christians would participate in passing of the peace. This would allow for a transformation, Christ dwelling within us, to take place because any barriers or obstacles (feelings of anger towards another for example) would no longer be present. The Christian practice of passing the peace could be seen as an act of repentance and forgiveness.

In other traditions and cultures, passing of the peace in worship takes on a different form. In Vincent Donovan's book *Christianity Recovered*, he introduces the Masai and their tradition of passing the peace. Within the Masai culture, "One of their most significant gestures ... is to offer one another a handful of grass as a sign of peace, happiness and well-being. During arguments ... a tuft of grass

¹⁰⁵ Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 1999), 67.

offered by one Masai and accepted by another is an assurance that no violence will erupt."¹⁰⁶ According Von Donovan, "No Masai would violate that sacred sign of peace offered, because it was not only a sign of peace; it was peace."¹⁰⁷ This concept is not only evident with the Masai culture, but within our early Christian context. The liturgical practice of passing the peace is not a symbol or sign of peace, but actual peace as indicated earlier. Christian liturgical practices such as passing the peace "[embodies], physical things. We eat bread, drink from shared cups, we wash feet and shake hands, we are doing things with our bodies as our bodies can be shaped, transformed, even transubstantiated towards re-presenting Christ and re-remembering his body."¹⁰⁸ In our re-remembering and re-presenting Christ in our worship, we, as Christ's hands and feet in the world, are able to participate in peaceable acts. These acts can be in the form of bringing food during a funeral, lending a hand to someone who needs help or just being there for someone.

Within our Christian context, and in particular, within the United Church of Canada, the liturgical practice of passing the peace or 'kiss of peace' has disappeared and has begun to re-emerge within our liturgy. Within its inclusion in worship, Christ's presence of peace and peacefulness becomes visible. It is during worship that this liturgical element is practiced, but it is in the wider world that Christians act and participate in making Christ visible. Within worship, passing the peace is an important element in order for this

¹⁰⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 265.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 265.

¹⁰⁸ David Deane, "On Passing the Peace," Unpublished Essay, (Halifax, NS, 2011), 6.

transformation to occur; hence, it is interesting to note that this Christian practice, which was once omitted during worship, is now finding its way back into practice.

However, since its re-emergence, placement of passing the peace within worship has been cumbersome. As noted earlier, its roots are grounded in the sacrament of Holy Communion, as sign of reconciliation with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ, so it was understood as a sacred act. During United Church worship, participants felt that passing the peace went from a sacred act to social conversation very quickly. For most, this was seen as very disruptive and eroded the spiritual sacredness of this liturgical practice. Even though the original understanding of being a sacred act may be missing within United Church of Canada's liturgy and worship, the traditional understanding of passing the peace enmeshed in sacredness was not lost for many participants as they as reveal.

For Dennis, he could potentially see the intent of passing the peace as a sacred act but it depended on how it was framed.

Dennis:

"In terms of the sacrament of Holy Communion. I mean these are elements which humans have brought to a table to give to other humans and unless you really frame it around something which tries to give some sacredness to it, I mean what is it more than just a little bit of juice and a little bit of bread. So, one could say "Okay this a handshake" unless we can frame it around why it is intended to be significant what's there about this that makes this passing of the peace by the people within this congregation and what makes it so special ... otherwise people may not see in themselves why it is special."

For others, they already saw it framed as a sacred act.

Weldon:

"For me spiritually, I think anything that binds us more deeply ... things like how we take communion ... it's part of the sacred piece within our church service. So, I think it is a sacred act."

Felix:

"When we're passing the communion elements, we always try to say something "body of Christ" or "blood of Christ" ... there's a little more spirituality in passing the elements or in passing the peace."

When I asked one participant why she felt passing the peace was important, she said

Beverly:

"because it's Christ ... you could say in sacred terms, 'the Christ within me greets the Christ with you' and at that moment, you're mentioning Christ as if he's almost there. It's the same as when you have communion, it's the blood."

Many of the participants recognized the sacramental element invoked during passing the peace as they saw it as having a similar function such as Holy Communion. Traditionally as indicated, it was situated within the sacramental act of Holy Communion. This is evident within worship that dates back as far as the second century. Justin Martyr wrote "At the conclusion of the prayers [of the people] we greet one another with the kiss. Then bread and a chalice containing wine mixed with water are presented to the one presiding

over the brethren."¹⁰⁹ This liturgical practice is surrounded in sacredness.

Like many of the participants who expressed passing the peace as a sacred act, there are other denominations who are conveying the same sentiments. In the Lutheran tradition, they see passing the peace as a "liturgical blessing, a benediction. In Lutheran theology, a blessing is a Word with sacramental and "exhibitive" power; it actually confers the gift of which it speaks."¹¹⁰ However, like the United Church of Canada, "it is the sacramental and eschatological seriousness that is so sadly lacking in [their] present practice of Sharing the Peace."¹¹¹ For both denominations, The United Church of Canada and Lutheran, "there is little consciousness of the depth and breadth and height of the words "The Peace of [Christ] be with you," containing as they do the whole biblical eschatology."¹¹²

As a sidebar, when I was interviewing my participants I asked them this question or something of a similar vein, "When or how did you know that this liturgical practice was something different than a handshake?" Some participants could pinpoint a specific time such as a minister emphasizing its importance during a church meeting (i.e. Session) or worship service/sermon; however, there was a phenomenon of the unknown that was spoken of by several participants. They indicated that they could not tell me how they knew it was sacred, they just knew. When I concluded my research, I wondered if this

¹⁰⁹ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 74.

¹¹⁰ David Yeago, "Unfashionable Thoughts on Sharing the Peace," *Dialog - A Journal of Theology*, Yale Divinity School. Vol. 23 (Autumn, 1984): 292.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 292.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 292.

knowing was embedded within each one of us, mysteriously invoked by God. Could it be that just as it is innate for us to love, it just as innate for us to pass the peace? For me, this phenomenon was very intriguing as data and is an area I hope to research and explore in some capacity in the future.

Analysis with Implications

In conjunction with the themes that emerged from my research data on individuals' experience of passing the peace during Sunday worship, there were underlying implications for the practice of ministry that became apparent. These implications can impact congregations and leaders within the United Church of Canada's community as well as the wider church. From the data, the most significant implication that was identified was the need and desire for education. In juxtaposition with education, the lack of denominational resources was another implication that revealed; and lastly, there was a strong desire for the liturgical practice of passing the peace to be framed with sacredness. Most participants' experienced passing the peace as a social act, rather than a sacred one, which is a common experience within the United Church of Canada. This implication as well is linked to education.

I. Education

As noted above, the significant implication that was highlighted by my participants was the need and desire for education. For individuals, there can be miscommunication or misunderstanding as to

what the intent, meaning, role and function of passing the peace actually is. In Shelley E. Cochran's article, "Passing the Peace, Restoring Relationships," her congregants "argued that [passing the peace] did not serve any useful purpose. It did give you time to let someone else know you wanted to see him after church, they said; but that was about the extent of its significance."¹¹³ This sentiment is not unique as many individuals today are passing the peace during worship and don't know why. This was reiterated in the voice of one of my participants as she stated "Well, it's just interesting to know, it's nice to know why we do it." According to Cochran, in her article cited above, she articulated this issue of 'not knowing' as resulting from a

lack of historical and theological clarity regarding the ritual of the peace. In our confusion, we've let it degenerate. We've allowed the ritual of passing the peace to become watered down and domesticated largely because we no longer know or understand either the original practice or its original intent.¹¹⁴

To have an understanding that the liturgical practice of passing the peace

arose out of Jesus' teaching. It reminded members of the early church to pray for their enemies, to turn the other cheek and to be reconciled with those who had something against them ... It reminded them to love as Jesus

¹¹³ Shelley E. Cochran, "Passing the Peace, Restoring Relationships," *The Christian Minister* (March-April, 1993): 18

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 19.

had loved and to forgive as they had been forgiven.¹¹⁵

It became evident within the data that this was an area that was this knowledge or understanding was lacking for some of participants. When I asked them "What their understanding of passing the peace was?" initially some immediately migrated to the physical act of passing the peace ... its weekly placement in worship, liturgical seasons that it has been passed in and how they do it. While two individuals stated "I really don't have a solid understanding of, if there's any, like what the roots of it are, the origins," while another said "I guess I need to have a better understanding...I don't know a good understanding of what is the intent." Even though, an understanding emerged from their interviews, they were not able to name it directly.

For some other participants, they had a sense of passing the peace's true intent and meaning; however, their knowledge was transmitted either from their experience in another denominational worship setting or from their own minister during a church committee meeting or sermon. One participant indicated that his understanding was formed from what he had been taught. He stated "Education was a component of it." Even those, who were not aware of this knowledge, were curious about its roots and origins as one participant asked "Where does pass the peace come from?" while another stated ""If there's history we should know about that."

Several of my participants (5 out of 6) highlighted a desire and openness for education on this liturgical practice as they felt it

¹¹⁵ Shelley E. Cochran, "Passing the Peace, Restoring Relationships," *The Christian Minister* (March-April, 1993): 19.

would be "a wonderful thing to do," "something of interest," and it would be great "if you [researcher] did a short session ... on passing the peace," One participant even asked "Are you thinking about doing this? ... Do you need a teaching opportunity? ... I think it would be an amazing teaching opportunity." She then followed up with "I really hope do hope that you do that teaching session." Another participant saw education as assisting them in their understanding especially since their congregation did not regularly pass the peace. When asked by me "Do you think an educational component would benefit the congregation?" He responded "I certainly think that if we were to do it on a regular basis or if we wanted to grow in terms of what we hope to get out of it ... or they might not see 'why is this significant?' [or] what's important about it."

These questions were asked to me as many participants expressed interest in knowing more about passing the peace and its true intent and meaning. Some queried during interviews and some after, how I came to delve deeper with this topic. After all my interviews, I conducted a mini-tutorial in which I shared my transformation story (which is included in this document) and the history of passing the peace with its true intent. This proved to be very beneficial because in some small way, I had provided them with an educational component.

It is interesting to note that the importance of teaching churches and congregants the true meaning and intent of passing the peace was not only identified by my participants, but also by Alan Barthel in his book, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*. He published this book in 1988 and the issue of congregants

not understanding or knowing the true meaning and intent of passing the peace was brought to light. He ascertained that

to introduce the Peace to the congregation involves education. It could be done in smaller worship contexts throughout the week at meetings where some interpretation of the action is possible and people can become familiar with it.¹¹⁶

Now, 23 years later, the gap is even larger with this issue as congregants are becoming further and further removed from the early Christian understanding of passing the peace; and hence, the reason for my project.

Barthel's proposal of educational components such as small worship contexts is a wonderful starting point. The theological understanding of passing the peace can be incorporated in sermons, bible studies or committee meetings. Opportunities to learn passing the peace's origins, to teach its true meaning and intent and share the physical act of passing the peace are not confined only to those who are in the realm of academia; but for all, clergy and laity alike. However, in order for this to occur, denominational resources need to be made readily available.

II. Lack of Denominational Resources

In conjunction with education, a lack of literature on an individual's experience of passing the peace within worship was prominent as well as a lack of denominational resources. Throughout my research, I noticed that there was an abundance of literature that

¹¹⁶ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 75.

spoke to passing the peace within worship and liturgy; its role in terms of peace-making and reconciliation; and Christ's role in this liturgical practice which, in turn, revealed the true intent and meaning of passing the peace. Unfortunately, literature pertaining to how individuals experience passing the peace with worship (at this point in my research) has been scarce; however, this only confirmed for me the significance of this project and its importance for future researchers.

In addition, it became apparent that there was very little literature on my project topic "passing the peace" within my own faith tradition, the United Church of Canada. I felt that this was due, in part, to the fact that this Christian practice has only been recovered with the United Church of Canada's faith tradition less than 50 years ago and only put into practice since the 1980s. Within other denominations, such as the Lutheran or Roman Catholic tradition, there was an abundance of resources that outlined their theological understanding of passing the peace; however, when I went searching for my own denominational resources, there were very little. With the United Church of Canada service books, I was able to trace passing the peace's re-emergence into the liturgy as well as understand why it was recovered. Another resource that I did find was Alan Barthel's book, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada* which only had a few pages that referenced passing the peace. His book was an asset because it gave me a greater understanding of how passing the peace is understood within my own faith tradition; however, even though this

was helpful, it was disappointing to discover that a vast majority of my literature resources would emerge from other denominations.

Due to a lack of resources, it creates difficulty for leaders within the church, clergy and laity alike, to be able to explore and teach the true intent and meaning of this liturgical practice from their own denominational perspective. In order for clergy and laity to have a greater understanding of passing the peace, resources need to be made available to assist in their ability to provide education as they could help solve some of the "confusion about passing the peace. They could ease our befuddlement, make the peace less superficial and might even integrate it more smoothly into the flow of worship."¹¹⁷ Resources, in collaboration with education, would then assist in closing the gap that has been continually growing between congregants not understanding or knowing the true meaning and intent of passing the peace from its early Christian roots.

Without education and resources, passing the peace will be continued to be understood as an ordinary or everyday gesture by some congregants and the key component of Christ's role will be diminished or not visible at all. Education on the true meaning and intent of passing the peace needs to be transmitted to the congregants as instruction on this Christian practice is essential. In order for passing the peace not to be "watered-down" and deemed an ordinary, everyday gesture rather than a sacramental as it was intended, the church needs to invest in resources that relay their theological understanding of passing the peace within the United Church of

¹¹⁷ Shelley E. Cochran, "Passing the Peace, Restoring Relationships," *The Christian Minister* (March-April, 1993): 20.

Canada's tradition. By providing opportunities for education for both clergy and laity, those that become pollinated in their knowledge will feel more apt to share and transmit their theological understanding because they will actually be able to articulate it. Spiritually, those who are enriched due to their learning of passing the peace's true intent and meaning will have the opportunity to strengthen and grow their connection to Christ and, in turn, their own faith journey. In saying this, even when an individual has the knowledge of its true intent and meaning, it is entirely their own choice how they embrace passing the peace within worship. They can decide if they want to pass it as a social gesture or a sacred act; however, with the presence of education, it can allow for individuals to reflect on their own thoughts on passing the peace and how they want to proceed.

In addition, another implication that emerged, which may be linked to education and lack of resources, is resistance on the part of clergy or committees and the incorporation of the liturgical practice of passing the peace within worship. This resistance may result from the lack of education and resources on the part of clergy and laity themselves. Therefore, if they are not fully knowledgeable of passing the peace's true meaning and intent; how then are they to relay it to their congregants? Participants, who worshipped at the congregation that did not regularly pass the peace, had indicated that had approached their minister about incorporating passing the peace within worship. He stated "I think I've suggested to (minister's name) at different times that we should do passing the peace at our services." The participant did not indicate if this did occur;

however, at this present time, this congregation does not regularly pass the peace. This would indicate to me that his suggestion was not integrated.

Another participant queried why it was only being done only every now and then.

Researcher: "Why are we doing this now? ... Have you asked that question?"

Dennis: "Oh yeah, oh yeah! I actually asked myself that question."

Researcher: "Have you ever asked anybody else?"

Dennis: "Ah (*lots of hesitation*) no."

Researcher: "No."

Dennis: "Not really, no, no. I guess I've sort of just gone along with it (*laughs*)."

Those who are ministering to congregations need to be open to conversations from their congregants. If an individual brings forth a suggestion, such as incorporating passing the peace within worship, it does not mean you have to implement it; however, it does present a wonderful teaching opportunity, in this case, to explore this early Christian liturgical practice of passing the peace. If anything, it will allow congregants to have a greater understanding of why this liturgical practice is significant.

III. Sacramental Act

Lastly, an implication that was identified via that data was a strong desire for passing the peace to be framed with sacredness. Due to the passing the peace's quick evolution from something sacred to

something social, it was indicated by participants that this liturgical practice should not be considered time for social conversation or a meet and greet within the worship. According to *A Sunday Liturgy*, the peace was to be understood as a time for us to "make our peace with another in accord with the scriptural injunction in Matthew 5:23-24 ... the meaning of the exchange of peace should always be kept clear. It should not become an anticipation of the coffee hour."¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, my participants' were experiencing passing the peace as moving very quickly from an experience that was spiritual and meaningful to something that was social and "chit-chatty." In saying this, one participant did indicate that he felt that social conversation was an extension of passing the peace. While another participant indicated that he didn't see passing the peace "as critical," but saw it more as an "opportunity for the congregation to meet and greet." He noted that this was something that the congregation already engaged in "after the service ... [with] a coffeetime." However, the general consensus from participants was that it should remain sacred rather than social. Several shared their experience of passing the peace as a social act.

Mary Ann:

"I find that's the one problem you have with passing of the peace. The service is almost ended and people start inquiring about things like whether you bought something or did something. It becomes social very quickly."

"I don't see it as a social time. I see out in the hall as a social time."

¹¹⁸ The United Church of Canada, *A Sunday Liturgy for Optional Use in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: Working Unit On Worship and Liturgy, Division of Mission in Canada, 1984), 43.

Beverly:

"A lot of people are, they're, it's more of a friendly greeting 'how are you?' 'good morning,' 'isn't it lovely', 'how are you?' 'it's nice to see you in church' and so the passing of the peace, well usually opens up another kind of a thing. It's not always just the passing of the peace. It starts with the passing but then other things happen."

What these participants are experiencing is exactly what Alan Barthel warns about in his book, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*. He stated that when practicing passing the peace, "It is important for the presider's invitation to the Peace [to bring] out its significance for worship as unity in Christ using words such as, "And now let us greet one another with the Peace of Christ," in order that it not become simply an invitation to say hello to the neighbour."¹¹⁹ My participants were citing exactly this! Further to this, in the liturgical resource *A Sunday Liturgy*, it suggests that the presider's words be, "Let us stand and greet one another with love and reconciliation"¹²⁰ which conveys much more meaning and weight than "turn and greet your neighbor." In several interviews, participants reflected on passing the peace, in terms of its sacredness, and referenced it with the sacrament of Holy Communion. Some participants felt that by framing this liturgical practice, as a sacred act such as Holy Communion, it may increase individual awareness of its significance and could potentially help alleviate the emergence of social time that can occur during passing the peace.

From their words and their strong desire, I began to explore the possibility of passing the peace becoming a sacramental act within the

¹¹⁹ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 75.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 75.

United Church of Canada. In order to determine if this indeed applicable, one needs to know what a sacrament actually is. Sacrament has been defined as a "rite believed to be a means of or visible form of grace."¹²¹ Within the Eastern, Roman Catholic, and some other Western Christian churches, a sacrament was "any of the traditional seven rites that were instituted by Jesus and recorded in the New Testament and that confer sanctifying grace."¹²² Whereas in most other Western Christian churches, a sacrament consisted of "two rites, Baptism and the Eucharist, that were instituted by Jesus to confer sanctifying grace."¹²³ The United Church of Canada falls into the latter category.

Within in my own faith denomination, we have two sacraments - sacrament of baptism and sacrament of Holy Communion. In Article XVI, *Of The Sacraments*, it states that both sacraments

"were instituted by Christ, to be a perpetual obligation as signs and seals of the covenant ratified in His precious blood, as a means of grace, by which, working in us, He doeth not only quicken but also strengthen and comfort our faith in Him."¹²⁴

Both sacraments allow us, as God's children, to feel one with Christ and include the community of faith which nourishes us as Christians.

In the early church, within the sacrament of Holy Communion, passing the peace was included within the Eucharist as a sign of reconciliation with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

¹²¹ The Free Dictionary website, "Sacrament," <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/sacrament> (accessed April 3rd, 2012).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ The United Church of Canada Website, "Doctrine," in *The Manual (2010)*, <http://www.united-church.ca/manual> (accessed October 2, 2011), 17.

Before one could enter into the sacrament of Communion, Christians would participate in passing of the peace. This would allow for a transformation, Christ dwelling within us, to take place because any barriers or obstacles (feelings of anger towards another for example) would no longer be present. The Christian practice of passing the peace could be seen as an act of repentance and forgiveness.

In the doctrine of the United Church of Canada, with regards to the sacrament of Holy Communion, it states that it a sharing "with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and His sacrifice on the Cross."¹²⁵ The sacrament of Holy Communion is an opportunity for transformation as Christ becomes spiritually transcendent for us. Christ is not in the past, but in the here and now. Christ becomes embodied within us through the sacramental act of Holy Communion. For me, both sacraments Baptism and Holy Communion, with the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, allows us to grow in love and relationship; thus, becoming one with Christ.

Within the liturgy of the United Church of Canada, the liturgical practice of passing the peace has been situated in various positions in the worship service. Initially, it has been located

"after the act of confession as an enactment of the forgiveness that has been offered. The Roman Catholic Church continues this practice, known by St. Augustine, of having the peace after the fraction and before the communion."¹²⁶

¹²⁵ The United Church of Canada Website, "Doctrine," in *The Manual (2010)*, <http://www.united-church.ca/manual> (accessed October 2, 2011), 17.

¹²⁶ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 75.

In 1932, the United Church of Canada followed in the footsteps of the Anglican tradition, as is evident in *The Book of Common Order*, as the liturgical practice of passing the peace was "placed (without gestures) as the last act before the receiving of communion."¹²⁷ Therefore, it was practice only during Holy Communion. Then in 1969, within the United Church of Canada's liturgical resource entitled *Service Book*, the peace was "restored it to its place to the Presenting of Gifts [which means it was only integrated in the sacrament of Holy Communion]."¹²⁸ Moving forward several years to 1984, we see the United Church of Canada's liturgical resource states that passing the peace is still located within the sacramental act of Holy Communion; however, it also resides in worship liturgy for every service, not just services that offer Holy Communion.¹²⁹ Thus, I feel this is where the evolution of passing the peace become social rather than remaining sacred began.

As indicated earlier, the United Church of Canada is not considered to be a sacramental church like other denominations (i.e. Roman Catholic); however, with that being said, the United Church of Canada still incorporates sacraments within their doctrine. If passing the peace was relocated (once again) to its original position located within the sacrament of Holy Communion as was evident in the liturgical resources of 1932 or 1969, it would already be embedded in the framework of being sacred and invoking Christ; hence, it would not need to be deemed a sacramental act that stands alone. Within its

¹²⁷ Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 75.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 75.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 71.

inclusion in the sacrament of Holy Communion, Christ's presence of peace and peacefulness becomes visible. Those who participate in passing the peace, through their transformation and embodiment of Christ, are able then to bring forth Christ-likeness to the wider world. Passing the peace is not only confined to a moment in time during worship, but extends beyond walls, buildings or congregations. Passing the peace becomes a 'mode of being' which begins with Christ dwelling within our hearts and overflows into our everyday lives, which leads us to be Christ-like. It is during worship that this liturgical element is practiced, but it is in the wider world that Christians act and participate in making Christ visible. Passing the peace is an important element in order for this transformation to occur.

With the potential for transformation to occur during passing the peace, it could also be conceivable that it could also alleviate the likelihood of passing the peace evolving into something social. By having this liturgical practice integrated with an already pre-existing sacrament, it would not need to be re-tooled as it would only be returning to its original placement within the worship liturgy of the United Church of Canada; thus, like the sacrament of Holy Communion, the true meaning and intent of Christ dwelling within us would already have been enacted through the passing the peace. Spiritually, our hearts and minds would be prepared to receive the elements, Christ's body and blood, which also dwells within us. Therefore, within the United Church of Canada, the liturgical act of

passing the peace could be then understood not as a social gesture, but as a sacred act which it was meant to be.

Conclusion

As I set out eight months ago to explore the question "How individuals experience the liturgical practice of passing the peace within Sunday Worship?" I had no idea how my journey would evolve or where I would end up. This was my very first major research project which incorporated qualitative research methodology. In my search for a topic, I did not think that the liturgical practice of passing the peace would be a topic that held much merit or would prove to be very interesting. In addition, I had a running tape in my head which made the assumption that nobody would want to talk about passing the peace. I was seriously mistaken on all fronts. After my initial groundwork in the first semester, my passion for this liturgical practice became even more excited and filled me with fervour. I became convinced that my project question had merit and should definitely be pursued.

As I demonstrated in this paper with the presentation and analysis of the data, passing the peace was a topic that generated much conversation. I was able to research and analyze how individuals experience the liturgical practice of passing the peace within Sunday worship. Through examining my participants' engagement of passing the peace, I gained a greater understanding of how this ancient liturgical practice was understood and experienced by individuals within the United Church of Canada today. In addition, this project provided participants with an opportunity to explore passing the peace as a

liturgical practice; it gave them a chance to reflect and enrich their own understanding of passing the peace's true intent and meaning; and as well it opened new avenues of strengthening their relationship with God. I was extremely excited to discover individuals who were just as passionate about passing the peace as I was. In addition, I felt honored to hear their experience of passing the peace; to encounter that their experience, at various points, paralleled my own; and to learn that some participants viewed passing the peace as a "mind set" or in their "everyday lives" which is a view that I hold very close to my own heart and faith.

There were some challenges that presented themselves as well. I was disappointed to find that the majority of United Church of Canada congregations do not pass the peace within their liturgy. In my search for potential field sites, I received more 'no, we don't pass the peace here' than 'yes, we do.' At one point, I thought I may even have to go outside my own denomination to explore this question; however, I was extremely lucky to find my field sites for this research project. Another challenge that I faced was finding actual participants. I thought it may be difficult to get individuals to come forward and in this area, I was proven correct; however, individuals did come forward after several weeks of bulletin requests and personal recruiting efforts at each church. Once participants became involved in the interviews, their enthusiasm for the topic and the research project became evident.

After I presented my oral presentation¹³⁰ on this research project, I felt confident that my research proved fruitful, not only for me, but for the wider church as well. By advocating for passing the peace to be incorporated in worship as well as stressing the significance of its true meaning and intent, I feel this liturgical practice will enrich the wider church community in addition to the United Church of Canada. The United Church of Canada is already grounded with a strong desire for mission, in terms of outreach and social justice, which is lived out in churches and congregations. Because Christ was able to participate in peaceable acts, we too, with Christ dwelling within in us, are able to as well. Christ becomes the active agent to making passing the peace possible within the body of Christ. With Christ as our example, the church or 'body of Christ' "can also be the site of transformation and actual Christlike activities."¹³¹ As 'little Christs,' we are then called to live out what God desires for us as children of God - to be Christ's hand and feet in the world and to open ourselves to the Holy spirits that moves us to peacefulness. As a church, as a congregation, participating in the Christian practice of passing the peace (whether for the first time or on a regular basis) we are uniting ourselves with Christ.

In conclusion, the liturgical practice of passing the peace may be something that seems "new" to the United Church of Canada; however, it has been in existence since the time of Christ over 2000 years ago. For the United Church of Canada, if it were to re-discover this

¹³⁰ Kym Burke-Cole, "Passing the Peace: Social Gesture or Sacred Act?," http://youtu.be/D_ilxHKIF4 (Graduate Project Seminar 2012, Atlantic School of Theology St. Columba Chapel, Halifax, NS, March 7th, 2012).

¹³¹ David Deane, "On Passing the Peace," Unpublished Essay, (Halifax, NS, 2011), 6.

ancient Christian liturgical practice, embed it with a theological understanding, and position it within the sacrament of Holy Communion, it is possible then that passing the peace "can nonetheless serve for us much of the same function of unity it did for the ancient church."¹³² Therefore, I feel that passing the peace is a practice that is an invocation of Christ to be present within us as we go into the world. Much like the sacrament of Holy Communion, it is a liturgical act that is sacred act that should be reclaimed by the United Church of Canada. It is, however, interesting to note that this Christian practice, which was once omitted during worship, is now finding its way back into practice within the United Church of Canada.

¹³² Alan Barthel, *A Guide To Sunday Worship in the United Church of Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: The United Church Publishing House, 1988), 73.

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APPENDIX I

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GS3000 Graduate Project Research Application
2011 - 12

In submitting this application for consideration, the undersigned student acknowledges that s/he has read the Tri-Council Policy Statement: *Ethical Conduct for Research involving Humans* and agrees to comply with the policies and procedures outlined therein.

It is further acknowledged that no AST Graduate Research Project, including the one described in this application, will use any form of deception in gathering information from any participants.

Name of Student Investigator: Kymberely Burke-Cole

Title of Research Project: Passing the Peace - Sacred Act or Simple Gesture?

Summary of Proposed Research

1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research project - its major focus and the rationale for the research:

The proposed research project will research and analyze how individuals experience the liturgical practice of passing the peace within Sunday worship. Through examining participants' engagement of passing the peace, I am seeking to gain a greater understanding of how this ancient liturgical practice is understood and experienced by individuals within the United Church of Canada today. It will provide participants with an opportunity to explore passing the peace as a liturgical practice; gain a greater understanding of what it means to them; and how, and if, it impacts their relationship with God.

The rationale for this research is entirely personal. Passing the peace was not a common liturgical practice within my own experience of worship; therefore, I was not accustomed to participating in it. When I did participate, I did not really comprehend why the congregation engaged in this liturgical practice. For me, it was experienced more as a gesture or greeting rather than a sacramental act. During my first year at theological school, while participating in orientation week, I observed Dr. David Deane giving a lecture. He highlighted how passing the peace has become more of a gesture rather than a sacramental act. He outlined how the liturgical practice of passing the peace had moved from a sacramental act in which an individual actually passes another individual peace to a time of common greeting and gestures. The theology of reconciliation had become omitted and no longer visible. The liturgical practice of passing the peace embodies the act of reconciliation with one another, and because it does, this means that if you were hungry, I would feed you; if you

were thirsty, I would give you something to drink; if you were naked, I would clothe. As in the times of Early Christianity, I would pass you the peace. My experience of this lecture was transformative to me. I no longer looked at passing the peace as a time of greeting but as a time of reconciliation with my brothers and sisters in Christ. This then becomes a powerful sacramental act and not simply a gesture or friendly greeting. This experience was life-altering for me and created a curiosity within me to know what others' experiences of passing the peace has been like for them.

2. a. Proposed Research Field Site/s:

The proposed research field sites are one United Church of Canada congregation for a grounded study and a maximum of three United Church of Canada congregations for the phenomenological study.

b. Name of Principal Research Consultant:

- i) Outline the relationship of the principal research consultant to the proposed field, potential participants from that field, and to the student researcher.*

The following individuals are research consultants to the proposed project and field:

Dr. David Deane

Dr. David Deane is a professor at the Atlantic School of Theology where the researcher is attending her final year of academics. Dr. Deane is a theologian and scholar in the area of the kiss of peace (as known as passing the peace). His knowledge and expertise in this area will be beneficial on all fronts. In terms of relationship with the potential participants, he will have no direct contact; however, indirectly, his contributions will be visible through his assistance to the researcher which will then be translated to the potential participants. Dr. Deane's relationship to the researcher will be one of support, sharing of knowledge and resources of said topic. He will be a tremendous asset for this proposed project.

Rev. Stephen Fram

Rev. Stephen Fram is an ordained minister, within the United Church of Canada, to a congregation in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Rev. Fram will be in direct contact with the potential participants for the Grounded Theory field study. Due to his close relationship with the potential participants, he will act as a liaison between the researcher and the congregation as well as those who will be partaking in the grounded study. He may be tasked with the responsibility of selecting potential grounded study participants in consultation with the researcher. Those selected would then be contacted by the researcher for one-on-one interviews. In terms of relationship with

the researcher, Rev. Fram will work directly with the researcher at various steps of the process, in terms of support, as a resource and liaison.

Rev. Ivan Gregan

Rev. Ivan Gregan is an ordained minister, within the United Church of Canada, to a congregation in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Rev. Gregan will be in direct contact with the potential participants for the Phenomenology field study. Due to his close relationship with the potential participants, he will act as a liaison between the researcher and potential participants in the phenomenological field study. He may be tasked with the responsibility of selecting potential participants in consultation with the researcher. Those selected would then be contacted by the researcher for one-on-one interviews. In terms of relationship with the researcher, Rev. Gregan will work directly with the researcher at various steps of the process, in terms of support, as a resource and liaison.

3. Proposed Methodology:

a. Which qualitative method/s do you propose to use to gather and assess data from your participants?

The qualitative methods that I propose to use to gather and assess data from my participants are Grounded Theory and Phenomenology.

b. Briefly but concretely describe the method/s you will use for undertaking your research and gathering input from participants. Attach a copy of the main questions proposed for the method/s you have outlined.

The qualitative methodologies that I plan on employing in order to obtain research and gather input from participants are *Grounded Theory* and *Phenomenology*. *Grounded Theory* was first developed in 1967 by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. They "held that theories should be grounded in data from the field, especially in actions interactions, and social process of people" (Creswell, 1998, 56). The core essence of the *Grounded Theory* method is that "the development or generation of a theory [is] closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied" (Creswell, 1998, 56). In my case, that phenomenon would be passing the peace. The proposed purpose for *Grounded Theory* is that it enables the researcher to become entrenched with the research and allows them to get "into and [as] close to the real world so that the results and findings are grounded in the empirical world" (Patton, 2002, 125). With this methodology, the researcher is not disconnected from the research setting, but "enters the environment of the people with whom the research is being conducted" (Clarke, 2011). In the field, the

researcher, through a series of interviews, is able to observe and record information which will, in turn, become the basis for their data analysis. For *Grounded Theory* methodology, analysis of data is a process that is "systematic and follows a standard format" (Creswell, 1998, 57).

The framework of *Grounded Theory* has three steps which are categorized as "codings" - open, axial and selective. In open coding, "the researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information" (Creswell, 1998, 57); in axial coding, "the investigator assembles the data in new ways after opening coding" (Creswell, 1998, 57); and lastly, in selective coding, the researcher identifies a "story line" and writes a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model" (Creswell, 1998, 57). The three codings which are associated with *Grounded Theory* are "to help provide some "standardization and rigor" to the analytical process. Grounded theory is meant to "build theory rather than test theory." It strives to provide researchers with analytical tools for handling masses of raw data" (Patton, 2002, 127).

Some strengths of this particular methodology are its "systematic procedure of data analysis; data analysis is not a routine-like process (it is a creative and iterative process); methodology gives good support for discovering new ideas and relations; and it has the ability to incorporate unique insights during the course of study (Orlikowsky 1993)" (Goran and Cronholm, 2010, 190). Some limitations are that the "results are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies; data analysis can be time consuming" (Johnson, 2006, Table 14-02); and lastly, there can be a large volume of data which can result in frustration as there are no clues as to where to start categorization (which is especially valid for novice users)" (Goran and Cronholm, 2010, 190).

The second qualitative methodology is *Phenomenology* which is "a philosophical tradition [that] was first used in the development of a rigorous science by German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl" (Patton, 2002,105). For Husserl, phenomenology's main thrust was to investigate "how people describe things and experience them through their senses" (Patton, 2002, 105). As a philosopher, Husserl assumed that "we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness" (Patton, 2002, 105). As *Phenomenology* involves the senses, the process of extrapolating data relies heavily on the participants' description of their lived experience. Their specific encounter with the phenomena "must be described, explicated, and interpreted ... Interpretation is essential to an understanding of the experience and the experience includes the interpretation" (Patton, 2002, 106). For the participants, "there is no separate (or objective) reality for [them]. There is only what they know their experience is and means" (Patton, 2002, 106). *Phenomenology* essentially asks the question, "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" (Clarke, 2011). For phenomenological researchers, it is imperative

that there is recognition for the importance of knowing "what people experience and how they interpret the world ... [and] ... the only way for [them] to really know what another person experiences is to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for [themselves]" (Patton, 2002, 106). *Phenomenology* is unique in its approach as "there is an assumption that *there is an essence or essences to shared experience*. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (Patton, 2002, 106). The framework for the *Phenomenology* methodology is outlined in the following three steps

According to von Echartsbert (1986), the three steps are Step 1 - The Problem and Question Formulation - The Phenomenon. The researcher delineates a focus of investigation ... formulates a question in such a way that it is understandable to others; Step 2 - The Data Generating Situation - The Protocol Life Text ... researchers start with descriptive narrative provided by subjects who are viewed as co-researchers ... we query the person and engage in dialogue, or we combine the two; [and] Step 3 - The Data Analysis - Explication and Interpretation. Once collected the data are read and scrutinized so as to reveal their structure, meaning configuration, coherence, and the circumstances of their occurrence and clustering ... emphasis is on the study of configuration and meaning ... involving both the structure of meaning and how it is created (Moustakas, 1994,15).

Some strengths of this particular methodology are there is "direct interaction with the participants; the researcher is able to ask for clarification and to ask immediate follow-up/probing questions [supplemental questions]; the researcher is able to observe nonverbal responses which can be supportive or contradictory to the verbal responses; and the data is in the participants' own words" (The University of Idaho). Some limitations of this method are the "findings are difficult to generalize to a larger population; data is often difficult to analyze and summarize; and some critics of phenomenology think you cannot describe the unique experiences AND make generalizations about the experiences at the same time (Marvin Farber 1966)" (University of Idaho).

Please see Appendix I for a copy of the main questions proposed for the methods I have outlined for this proposed project.

c. Describe the potential participants you hope to recruit for your study, including the number needed and other distinguishing features that make them suitable subjects for your research.

For the grounded study, I hope to recruit three to four potential participants for one-on-one interviews from the field site (a United Church of Canada congregation). The researcher would like potential participants to be over the age of 18; have limited or no experience in passing the peace; and possess a willingness to share their experience of the phenomena.

In addition to this congregation, the researcher will need a maximum of three United Church of Canada congregations for the phenomenological study. Within this study, three potential participants will be necessary in order to conduct one-on-one interviews. The researcher would prefer three different individuals from three different United Church of Canada congregations. However, the researcher comprehends that this may not be possible due to lack of potential field sites. The researcher would like potential participants to be over the age of 18; have vast experience (via weekly worship services over a long duration) in passing the peace; and possess a willingness to share their experience of the phenomena.

d. Describe how and by whom potential participants will be recruited. Include a copy of materials to be used for recruitment (eg. posters, flyers, letters of information or invitation, telephone scripts.)

The potential participants will be recruited by way of invitation via bulletin announcements (See Appendix II) and education sessions. For the grounded study, there will be two educational sessions (week one and week three) provided during the worship service by myself. Week One education session will be a brief outline of the project and Week Three will be a more in-depth session with a focus on the historical meaning of passing of the peace. For both methodologies, the potential participants will be recruited by an announcement that will run in the church bulletin of the confirmed United Church of Canada congregations (4 weeks with the grounded study and two-three weeks for the phenomenological study). In addition to the bulletin announcement, there will be information sheets available with consent forms attached. If there are a large number of participants who volunteer, there will be a process of selection. Once participants have submitted their consent forms me, I will then consult the minister (who is also a project consultant) who can help vet the consent forms for potential participants. I will then follow-up (via telephone) with the potential participants to make arrangements for one-on-one interviews. Due to research limitations, I am only able to interview three to four participants for the grounded study and three participants for the phenomenological study; therefore, if there are more volunteers than needed, I will forward a letter of appreciation

(See Appendix III) to those not selected to participate in my grad project.

- e. If your project intends to work with children, youth or other vulnerable participants, outline how you intend to involve parents or guardians in the recruitment process. What permissions will you obtain?***

The proposed project will not work with children, youth or other vulnerable participants.

- f. Identify the location/s where you intend to interact with your participants. If your participants are minors or vulnerable adults, describe the safety protocols you will practice in conducting your research in the field.***

The locations where I intend to interact with my participants are within their homes or private spaces/rooms in various United Church of Canada congregations. Preferably, it will be within the congregation that the potential participant is connected with.

- g. Briefly describe plans for providing feedback to study participants and to the wider community.***

For my project, I have two methods in which I plan on providing feedback to study participants and the wider community. For the grounded study, I plan on meeting with my consultant, at a time convenient for them, to discuss my analysis and learning. The minister/consultant will be able to then relay my feedback to the wider church congregation within a Session meeting and a worship service. For the individual study participants, I plan on contacting them via telephone and discussing my analysis and learning with them.

- h. Attach a copy of your proposed letter of appreciation to your participants.***

Please see Appendix III for a copy of my proposed letter of appreciation to my participants.

4. Potential Benefits from the study:

- a. Describe any anticipated benefits to participants from their involvement in the project.***

The anticipated benefits to participants from their involvement in the project are that it will allow one congregation to explore the pros and cons of passing the peace; participants and congregations will be able to gain a deeper understanding of their experience with the phenomena of passing the peace; and lastly, it may help

congregants and participants gain a greater understanding of liturgy within worship.

b. Describe any anticipated benefits to the church and/or the wider community from this study.

The anticipated benefits to the church and/or the wider community from this study are that there is a public presentation on March 8-9, 2012 at the Atlantic School of Theology in the Columba Chapel; an electronic copy of the completed research project will be available at the Atlantic School of Theology's library for reading and reference; and lastly, it could provide a different perspective and a greater understanding of the liturgical practice, passing the peace, within United Church of Canada worship.

5. Potential Risks from the study:

a. Describe any known or anticipated risks and stresses to participants which may arise in the course of their role in your research. Consider physiological, psychological, emotional, social or other risks and stresses. Indicate the level and likelihood of each risk identified, as you perceive it.

Based on conversations with course professor and consultants, we don't believe there are any known risks or anticipated stresses.

b. Describe the procedures or safeguards in place to protect the health and interests of participants in light of the risks and stresses identified above.

As there are no risks or anticipated stresses, there is no need for procedures or safeguards to be put in place in order to protect the health and interests of participants.

6. Process for Obtaining Informed Consent

a. Describe how you will present potential participants with information about your project, the nature of their participation in your research, any risks involved and their right to withdraw from the project during the course of the research.

I will present potential participants with information about my project, the nature of their participation in your research, any risks involved and their right to withdraw from the project during the course of the research would be provided within my information letter.

b. Provide a copy of the information letter and consent form which will be

given to participants (or their legal guardians) for their signature.

Please see Appendix IV for the information letter and Appendix V for the consent form.

C. If you will not be providing written information or obtaining written consent from any or all participants, explain why. Also explain how you will ensure participants understand the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw from the project at any time.

As I will be providing written and obtaining written consent from any or all participants, this question is not applicable.

7. Protecting the Identity of Participants and Confidentiality of Data

a. Describe the procedures you will use to protect the identity of participants (and field sites, if need be) and the confidentiality of data while the research is being conducted.

In order to ensure protection of identity for my participants and field sites as well as the confidentiality of data while the research is being conducted, I will implement the following procedures. Throughout my research, in my presentation and final paper, I will incorporate the method of coding, through the usage of pseudonyms. Each participant and field site will be assigned a pseudonym to aid the researcher in processing and analyzing data; thus, participants and field sites will not be identified by their own names.. As their names and revealing facts will be changed, this will then afford them anonymity. To further protect individual identities, the consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored securely within my home under lock and key.

b. Describe the procedures you will use to protect the identity of participants (and field sites, if need be) at the different stages of reporting your research.

As I am implementing procedures that will protect the identity of participants and field sites throughout the entire research project, this question is not applicable.

c. If you do not consider protecting identities to be an important issue, given the nature of your research, explain why and how you will communicate this to potential participants.

As I am implementing procedures that will protect the identity of participants and field sites throughout the entire research project, this question is not applicable.

d. Describe your procedures for secure storage of any tapes, computer records and written documents during data collection.

In order to ensure secure storage of any tape recordings, computer records and written documents during data collection, I have put in the following procedures. All audio recordings (tapes or digital), computer records, and written documents will be under lock and key in my home office which is accessed only by myself; and as well all audio recording (tapes or digital), computer records, and written documents will be secured on a password protected computer and audio device recorder.

e. Describe how long you will retain your data and how you will finally dispose of them.

The gathered data (tape recordings, computer records, written documents) will be in my possession and under lock and key in my home and secured on a password protected computer until the completion of the study course which has an end date of April, 2012. At this time, all gathered data will be submitted to Dr. Jody Clarke for secure storage for one year. On April 30th, 2013, Dr. Clarke will destroy all research data.

Signature of Student Researcher:

Date:

Signature of Faculty Supervisor:

Date:

APPENDIX II

The main questions proposed for the qualitative research methods

Core Questions for both methodologies

1. What is your understanding of passing the peace?
2. What was your experience of passing the peace today?
3. What did you feel when you passed the peace?
4. What was the best thing about passing the peace?
5. What was the worst thing about passing the peace?
6. Did you feel a spiritual difference today?
7. Did passing the peace assist you in your relationship with the Divine?
8. Were there any questions that you think were important, but I did not ask?

Phenomenology Additional Question(s)

1. How has your understanding of passing the peace changed from week one to week four?
2. How would you feel if passing the peace became a weekly practice within your worship?

APPENDIX III

Grounded Study Bulletin Announcement

Kym Burke-Cole, a final year Atlantic School of Theology student, has asked our congregation for assistance with her grad research project "How People Experience Passing The Peace." Our engagement, as a congregation, for this project would be to participate in the liturgical practice of passing the peace within in our regular worship service for a period of three weeks (January 1st, 8th, & 15th). During these three weeks, Kym will then be seeking volunteers to interview regarding this experience. If you are interested in being interviewed, there are information and consent sheets available. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Kym at (902) 469-???? or thecoless3@hotmail.com.

Phenomenological Bulletin Announcement

Kym Burke-Cole, a final year Atlantic School of Theology student, is asking our congregation for assistance with her grad research project "How People Experience Passing The Peace." As our congregation regularly passes the peace within worship service, Kym is seeking for volunteers to interview regarding this experience. If you are interested in being interviewed, there are information and consent sheets available. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Kym at (902) 469-???? or thecoless3@hotmail.com.

APPENDIX IV

Mrs. Kym Burke-Cole
Researcher, Atlantic School of Theology
112 Keyport Avenue
Eastern Passage, NS
B3G 0C5

Date

Name of Non-Participant (Grounded Study)

Address of Non-Participant

Dear Non-Participant,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your interest in participating in my research project "How Individuals Experience Passing The Peace In Worship." Unfortunately, due to a limited number of allowable participants, you were not selected for the one-on-one interview process. However, I would like to thank you for your time, willingness and participation within the larger group field study which was an important aspect of my success in this research project.

Thanks to you and your fellow congregants, I was able to meet my course objectives which were to undertake an in-depth exploration of a question or issue in ministry. I hope that you will continue to support any future research or educational project as well as use the knowledge you have gained through this experience and share them with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. If in the future, I require additional participants, I will keep your name on file.

Yours In Christ,

Kym Burke-Cole¹³³

¹³³ The format, structure and some content were cited from the Sample Letters Website, "Participant Appreciation Letter," <http://www.sampleletters.in/participant-appreciation-letter.html/> (accessed October 18th, 2011).

APPENDIX V

Mrs. Kym Burke-Cole
Researcher, Atlantic School of Theology
112 Keyport Avenue
Eastern Passage, NS
B3G 0C5

Date

Name of Non-Participant (Phenomenological Study)

Address of Non-Participant

Dear Non-Participant,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your interest in participating in my research project "How Individuals Experience Passing The Peace In Worship." Unfortunately, due to a limited number of allowable participants, you were not selected for the one-on-one interview process. However, I would like to thank you for your time and willingness to participate in my research project. I hope that you will continue to support any future research or educational projects. If in the future, I require additional participants, I will keep your name on file.

Yours In Christ,

Kym Burke-Cole¹³⁴

¹³⁴ The format, structure and some content were cited from the Sample Letters Website, "Participant Appreciation Letter," <http://www.sampleletters.in/participant-appreciation-letter.html/> (accessed October 18th, 2011).

APPENDIX VI

Mrs. Kym Burke-Cole
Researcher, Atlantic School of Theology
112 Keyport Avenue
Eastern Passage, NS
B3G 0C5

Date

Name of Participant (Both Studies)

Address of Participant

Dear Participant,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your participation in my research project "How Individuals Experience Passing The Peace In Worship." Your time, dedication and participation to this research study were extremely important in the success of my research project. Your active participation helped inspired thoughts and themes and your insights were highly appreciated by me as a researcher.

My graduate project was a success and I was able to meet my course objectives which were to undertake an in-depth exploration of a question or issue in ministry. I hope that you will also be able to use the knowledge you have gained through this experience and share them with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thank you for your participation!

Yours In Christ,

Kym Burke-Cole¹³⁵

¹³⁵ The format, structure and some content were cited from the Sample Letters Website, "Participant Appreciation Letter," <http://www.sampleletters.in/participant-appreciation-letter.html/> (accessed October 18th, 2011).

APPENDIX VII

INFORMATION FORM

"How Individuals Experience Passing The Peace Within Worship"

Kym Burke-Cole

660 Francklyn Street

Halifax, NS B3H 3B5

(902) 469-????

thecoless3@hotmail.com

I am student enrolled in the Master of Divinity Degree Programme at Atlantic School of Theology. As a part of my course work, under the supervision of the Dr. Jody Clarke, I am conducting a study on passing the peace. For this project, I will be interviewing people who have regularly participated in passing the peace during worship and those who have participated in passing the peace for their first time on a continuous basis. **I am inviting you to participate in my study.** The purpose of this work is to increase the body of knowledge that we currently have on this topic, and to explore how these themes might filter into the life of the church.

Your participation in this project is appreciated. The questions (see attachment) and the project are designed to allow you to articulate your experiences as you actively speak about what it is like to pass the peace during worship. The researcher will take notes and audiotape the conversation.

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly **confidential and anonymous**. Audiotapes, computer records, and written documents will be kept under lock and key and a password protected computer and audio device until April 1st, 2012 which is the completion date of this course of study. At that time, all audiotapes, computer records, and written documents will be submitted to Dr. Jody Clarke who will destroy them on April 30th, 2013. Names and revealing facts will be changed, thus affording you anonymity. To further protect individual identities, this consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored separately. Furthermore, the results of this study will be presented as a group and no individual participants will be identified.

If you are willing to participate in this project please read the consent form attached indicating your willingness to be involved by giving your signature on the form and returning it to Kym Burke-Cole.

If you have any questions, please contact Kym Burke-Cole, Student Researcher, at (902) 469-???? or thecoales3@hotmail.com or Dr. Jody Clarke, Research Supervisor, at (902) 425-???? or JClarke@astheology.ns.ca

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of Atlantic School of Theology. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Susan Willhauck at swillhauck@astheology.ns.ca, Chair, Research Ethics Board.

Please keep this letter for your own records.

APPENDIX VIII

CONSENT FORM

"How Individuals Experience Passing The Peace Within Worship"

Kym Burke-Cole

660 Francklyn Street

Halifax, NS B3H 3B5

(902) 469-????

thecoales3@hotmail.com

I acknowledge that have seen the research procedures and outline, and I have been given a copy.

I know that if I have any questions they were answered to my satisfaction. I know that I can contact the researcher at any time should I have further questions.

I am aware that my participation in this study is purely voluntary and I am assured that personal records relating to this study will be kept confidential, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and that if I withdraw none of my interview records will be used in the study.

By signing this consent form, I am indicating that I have fully understood the information provided and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: